

T H E S I S

on

THE DOCTRINE of SIN in the THEOLOGY of JOHN BUNYAN

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## INTRODUCTION.

### Scope and Importance of the Subject.

The programme of this thesis is an exposition and examination of the theological teaching of John Bunyan on the doctrine of sin. This involves not only a statement of his personal views on this topic but also some account of the sources whence they sprang, and some appreciation of their ultimate value. Sources, Content and Value are thus appropriate, if not inevitable headings for an undertaking like the present.

The task thus indicated involves primarily a study of Bunyan's works. His popular fame rests upon three masterpieces - "The Pilgrim's Progress" (1678), "The Holy War" (1682), and "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners" (1666). These are the finest flowers of his genius, and the greatest of the three, from every point of view, is undoubtedly the first. Nevertheless it is incorrect to regard Bunyan as an author with only one or, at most, three productions to his credit. In reality he was a voluminous writer, and an authoritative catalogue<sup>1</sup> of his works contains no fewer than fifty-three items, in addition to which there are others whose genuineness is doubtful. If Bunyan is to be /

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1. Brown. Vol. II. pp. 237-8.

be given a fair hearing, none of his available writings may be safely disregarded. While his world-renowned-works have been carefully studied and diligently expounded in many quarters, his lesser known writings have been comparatively neglected. Here is an almost untrodden, yet not altogether unpromising field for research, to which this thesis will endeavour to devote special attention.

Bunyan's numerous works may be divided into three main classes - allegorical, autobiographical and homiletical.

(1). The first group - the allegorical - embraces the most characteristic and celebrated of his writings. It contains "The Pilgrim's Progress" and "The Holy War" to which may be added "The Life and Death of Mr Badman" (1680). The last-named may, for convenience<sup>s</sup> sake, be included with the other two. It displays certain allegorical features inasmuch as it is a counterpart of "The Pilgrim's Progress", and its characters bear allegorical names, such as Wiseman, Attentive, and Badman. But the story itself, which is cast in the form of a dialogue, is more thinly disguised than the average allegory, and is more of the nature of a picture drawn directly from life, or of a novel which needs /

needs no interpretation.

The allegorical group contains Bunyan's teaching in popular, imaginative, and, to a certain extent, unsystematic form. This is the special type of writing in which he excels. Herein his genius found its natural expression. His was an allegorical mind. He revelled in allegory and analogy, and even those works of his which are not professedly allegorical are constantly lit up by quaint and vivid similitudes. As an allegorist he has never been equalled or even approached.

An allegory, being an extended metaphor or "The description<sup>1</sup> of one thing under the image of another", requires interpretation. The writer's meaning and teaching are not directly conveyed to the reader, but must be searched for beneath the surface. The metaphorical drapery of the pilgrim and the soldier must be stripped off, and the underlying frame-work laid bare. "The Pilgrim's Progress" has a skeleton, albeit that skeleton has been skilfully covered and beautifully clad. It is highly imaginative, and yet its feet are firmly planted on the prosaic world of reality. Its least attractive parts are those where the bones protrude, for example in conversations where abstract doctrine is discussed, such as that between /

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1. Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary p. 22.

between Talkative<sup>1</sup> and Faithful; but such sections, though not popular, have their uses for those in search of Bunyan's theology. In short the life-like, winsome figures of "The Pilgrim's Progress" conform to the laws of spiritual anatomy. In Bunyan's allegories there is a very definite and substantial, though partly concealed, foundation of dogma, which it will be our endeavour to expose.

(2). The second or autobiographical group comprises "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners" to which may be added "A Relation of the Imprisonment of Mr John Bunyan" (1765). Here we find ourselves in contact with undisguised reality. Here Bunyan's personal religious experience is nakedly set forth. Here he speaks for and of himself in the first personal pronoun. "Grace Abounding" is a human document of great psychological and spiritual - some would add pathological - interest and value. It is a portrait of the artist sketched by himself. It is a history of his spiritual experiences narrated by himself. It is Bunyan as he saw himself. Whether in his picture he is altogether fair to himself is another question. It is very doubtful whether an artist is in the /

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1. Pilgrim's Progress p. 106 seq.



the best position himself to sketch his own portrait. The most skilful of doctors cannot act in all circumstances as his own physician. To endeavour to be subject and object at the same time is a hazardous, perhaps impossible feat. But Bunyan attempted the task, and the result is illuminating. We gain a more intimate knowledge of the man himself. His book is a kind of diary recording the fluctuations in his spiritual temperature as noted by himself. It is an "Apologia pro vita sua", though it is more like a self incrimination than a self defence. Its nearest parallel is perhaps the "Confessions" of St. Augustine. It has been aptly characterised by Dr. Alexander Whyte as an invaluable "commentary" on "The Pilgrim's Progress", and it is of first rate importance as an authority for Bunyan's views on sin and salvation and their genesis and growth in his own private experience.

(3) The third group - the homiletical - embraces the least known but most voluminous and numerous class of his works. Here we have Bunyan's teaching divested of allegorical form and presented plainly and directly, either for the edification of his flock and his readers or for controversial purposes. This group presents his teaching in /

in its most systematic and scientific shape. There is here a manifest effort after clear and consistent thought and logical arrangement. "Bunyan's<sup>1</sup> Doctrinal and Practical Treatises, like most similar writings in those times abound in divisions and subdivisions". This group of his works furnishes evidence that he was no mere fanciful and imaginative writer with a vague and nebulous notion of the Christian religion, but that he held a definite theological system, in which he was well-instructed and which he had carefully thought out for himself. He is not to be classed with Calvin, Schleiermacher or Ritschl as a leading theological thinker. He founded no new school; he propounded no new theory. But at least he has a good claim to rank high as a systematic theologian. He had great gifts of exposition, of reason and of thought as well as of imagination, and these gifts he cultivated and exercised.

Much of his writing in this group is acutely controversial. The first two works of his pen - "Some Gospel Truths opened" (1656) and "A Vindication of Some Gospel Truths Opened" (1657) show him as an antagonist of the /

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1. Offor, Vol. I. Preface p. IV.

the Quakers of his day, stoutly defending the historicity of the Scriptural Christ as against any undue exaltation of the "inner light". Later he played a doughty part in controversies on such themes as Baptism ("Differences in Judgment about Water Baptism" 1673), The Doctrine of Justification of Faith ("Defence of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith", 1672), The Seventh Day Sabbath ("Questions on the Seventh Day Sabbath", 1685) and the place of women in the Church ("A Case of Conscience Resolved", 1683). He was a deft and well-armed controversialist. After the manner of his time he indulges on occasion, in hard hitting and plain speaking. But he never mistakes abuse for argument, and he rarely, if ever, fails to hold his own by means of logical and effective reasoning and the citation of Scriptural Authority in defence of his own standpoint. His homiletical and controversial works reveal an aspect of his mind to which insufficient justice has been given. They show him as a thinker who could give a reason for his faith.

The scope of the subject having been indicated, there naturally arises the question of its importance, upon which some further introductory remarks would seem to be requisite.

Why /

Why, then, is the theology of John Bunyan worthy of attention and study? One reason is that he is a representative exponent of the Puritan system of Christian doctrine.

Students of Puritanism cannot ignore Bunyan. But the all-sufficient reason is, in brief, that he is the author of "The Pilgrim's Progress". Bunyan the Puritan may have a very limited appeal, but the field of the author of "The Pilgrim's Progress" is world-wide.

"The Pilgrim's Progress" has been so much extolled that, at this time of day, one may well despair of offering any new and original tribute to its place and power. Any observations that may be offered have probably already been made many times over, and are now become trite and commonplace. It is universally acknowledged as one of the world's greatest books. It is a classic of the literature not of Britain only but of the world. As a religious literary power in Christendom it ranks second only to the Bible. In world-wide circulation and influence it is excelled by the Bible only. It has a far wider constituency than any work of mere theology. Where Calvin's "Institutes" numbers its readers by tens, Bunyan's masterpiece numbers its readers by thousands. No text-book of theology nor even any manual of devotion can approach it here. /

here. Nor can any well-read man pass it by without forfeiting his claim to being considered cultured and well-read. It is a classic of literature even more than of theology. Many classical works are not popular, and many popular works are not classical. "The Pilgrim's Progress" has attained the unusual distinction of being both popular and classical. Popular in origin, it has risen by sheer merit to classical rank. From the literary point of view it now holds a secure and high position in the select circle of English classics; from the theological point of view it is to be judged as popular and unscientific. It is certainly a religious, but scarcely a theological, classic. Why, then, should a popular work such as this be made the subject of a theological thesis? Just because it is popular, and because men are unconsciously influenced by it and take their theology from it. What is the theological doctrine of "The Pilgrim's Progress" which is, in varying measures, absorbed by all its readers? What are the implications and foundations of this work which has won and retains the popular ear? These are questions which are well worthy of the most careful and scientific investigation, - and these questions it is the aim of this thesis to explore and, as far as may be, to answer.

Testimonies /

Testimonies to the genius of the author of "The Pilgrim's Progress" are numerous and impressive to an altogether unique degree and extent. Lettered and unlettered alike have succumbed to his spell, and acknowledged in no measured terms, his power and charm. Every fragment of writing which proceeds from such a gifted pen shines in the "reflected glory" of the magnum opus, and merits, if not popular attention, at least scientific investigation. Bunyan's doctrinal treatises are not attractive reading, and will therefore never be widely read, but - if, for once, it may be permitted to coin a much-needed adjective - it is refreshing to recognize them here and there as characteristically Bunyanesque. They are lit up occasionally by quaint and homely touches in Bunyan's typical style. Moreover - and this is perhaps more to the point - they extend our knowledge of the author's mind, and no one will care to deny that the mind which produced "The Pilgrim's Progress" is worthy of serious study. If such a doubter there be, let him be confronted with an indication of the mighty array of weighty credentials which this work has accumulated since its appearance in the world.

"The /

"The Pilgrim's Progress (First Part) dates from the year 1678 its earliest emergence from the printing-press. Its career has been a triumphal progress from the beginning. It had no sickening period of "hope deferred" to sustain ere it came to its own. Its recognition was not tardy and grudging but immediate and enthusiastic. "Three<sup>1</sup> editions were called for within a year", and 100,000 copies are said<sup>2</sup> to have been sold during the subsequent ten years of its author's life. It is little to say that this leap into fame has not been succeeded by any relapse. Two and a half centuries have vastly consolidated and extended the hold of "The Pilgrim's Progress" on the affections of humanity. With the sole exception of the Bible it seems safe to assert that no book in Christendom has been so widely circulated in English-speaking countries and no book has been so frequently translated into foreign tongues. There can be no question of its cordial acceptance with the "common people".

In literary circles too it has long since won its way to recognition as a work of eminent genius. There are evidences that, at first, it was looked at askance by men /

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1. Brown Vol. II: p. 20.

2. Brown Vol. II: p. 202.

men of education and letters. It had to meet and overcome the assumption that no good thing could come from an ignorant tinker's pen. Even William Cowper, a century later, while dissociating himself from this prejudice, realises its presence, as witness his lines: -<sup>1</sup>

"I name thee not lest so despised a name

Should move a sneer at thy deserved fame"

On the other hand, Cowper's earlier contemporary, Dr. Samuel Johnson makes it clear that, in his opinion, the acknowledgment of Bunyan's genius requires no apology. It is significant that Johnson whose pronouncements on matters literary and scholarly are of the highest authority, should have no hesitation in bestowing his imprimatur on Bunyan. Johnson and Bunyan, as writers of English, are, in many respects, poles apart. Johnson was the finished product of the classical schools whose portals Bunyan never entered. Johnson's sonorous periods steeped in classical lore, shaped on classical models and abounding in classical terms, can never be mistaken for Bunyan's terse and graphic Anglo-Saxon. Johnson, in his day, was the living embodiment of learning, and even now, he still occupies a lofty pedestal. All the more weighty, therefore, /

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1. Quoted by Brown Vol. II p. 228.



therefore, is the scholar's handsome recognition of one who made no pretence to scholarship. It need only be added that so lofty and commanding is Johnson's position in the world of letters that his testimonial in itself would be almost sufficient to secure admission into a British Academy of Learning, if such an institution were ours. Here is a specimen of what he has to say in favour of Bunyan, the date of the utterance being in or about the year 1773 when "The Pilgrim's Progress" was almost a century old:- "Johnson<sup>1</sup> praised John Bunyan highly: "His Pilgrim's Progress has great merit, both for invention, imagination, and the conduct of the story; and it has the best evidence of its merit, the general and continued approbation of mankind.'" Johnson is<sup>2</sup> also stated to have declared that Bunyan's book is one of the three which all their readers wished had been longer.

Many other famous names like Swift, Addison and Sir Walter Scott have contributed their stone to Bunyan's cairn. Let it suffice to quote Macaulay's<sup>3</sup> words "The Pilgrim's Progress is, perhaps, the only book about which, after the lapse of a hundred years, the educated minority has /

1. Boswell's "Life". London, 1897 p. 189.

2. Brown. Vol. II; p. 229.

3. Quoted by Brown, Vol. II. p. 228.

has come over to the opinion of the common people".

The Pilgrim's Progress has thus accomplished an achievement comparable only to that of the Bible. It has succeeded in appealing to all sorts and conditions of men. It has brought together gentle and simple, lettered and unlettered at the feet of its author. Bunyan ranks as the most widely read and popular religious writer in the world. Preachers and theologians have rarely attained eminence as men of letters. They have rarely produced literary classics and, still more rarely, popular literary classics. It is Bunyan's distinction that he stands first in this select group. "The greatest religious genius of the English race" - such is the estimate given by Friedrich Heiler in his work on "Prayer". It is exalted indeed but who shall challenge it as exaggerated? Bunyan is no mere dissenter, sectary or schismatic. His work is one of the greatest unifying forces in a divided Christendom. All unwittingly it may be, he is an Apostle of Union. Humanity, as a whole, listens enraptured to his simple tale, just as humanity unites its diverse voices in such a hymn as Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light". Even Roman Catholics cannot resist the charm of this ardent Protestant. His master-piece is acceptable to them also after the passing reference /

reference<sup>1</sup> to Giant Pope has been duly expunged. In "The Pilgrim's Progress" widely separated sections of the Christian Church have found common ground. It belongs not to one denomination only; it is the treasured heritage and possession of Christians everywhere. It is one of the greatest assets of Christendom and of humanity.

What are the secrets of the unique success of Bunyan's masterpiece? Such a question is easy to propound but hard to answer. Humanity instinctively feels its charm, but wherein the charm lies is difficult to specify. To dissect the lily is not the way to discover the mystery of its winsomeness. You must go and see it for yourself as it grows in dignity and grace upon its own stem and in its own surroundings. Still, dissection has its scientific uses, and, even if analysis be discouraged, description may be attempted. To set down in cold blood the component elements in Bunyan's spell is a task far beyond our powers. Those who do not read him for themselves can never be made to understand or sympathise with, our enthusiasm. Even his readers, while they enjoy to the full, can scarcely be expected to describe something so elusive /

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1. Brown. Vol. II. p. 214.

elusive and intangible. To the few who still may persist in asking, 'Can any good thing come out of such a quarter?' the only possible answer is, 'Come and see'. Still, it would seem that the attempt should be made to set forth, however feebly, something of what we have seen. We may content ourselves here by indicating two factors which go far to explain Bunyan's place and power, and name and fame, as the author of "The Pilgrim's Progress. These are its style and its human appeal.

It is admitted on all hands that the literary style of "The Pilgrim's Progress" is a powerful asset in its favour. No doubt, style is always subordinate to message, and form is always subordinate to matter. But unless a book is readable it will not be widely read, however weighty the message it contains. A speaker may have something of importance to say, but unless he succeeds in conveying it into the minds of his hearers, his efforts will be fruitless. Style is the vehicle which conveys a writer's message to its destination. Hence it cannot be airily dismissed as of no importance because - if a common phrase may be permitted - it "delivers the goods". A clumsy and lumbering vehicle is a draw-back and a hindrance. Moreover, style is not a mere vehicle because it acts and reacts /

re-acts on the message itself. Indeed it is scarcely too much to say that it is "the man himself" as it is his characteristic way of expressing himself. Bunyan gains the ear of humanity by his attractive style. He thus prepossesses his readers in his favour. He wins their attention to what he has to say. The gentle current carries them on smoothly and pleasantly. To vary the metaphor, Bunyan's style is one of the most effective weapons in his armoury.

His message is simply the Puritan Gospel, but in "The Pilgrim's Progress" he presents it in an interesting and picturesque form. Hence his name survives and thrives while many a learned theologian of his time to whom he could not hold a candle in point of erudition, has passed into comparative oblivion. These scholars' works are for the most part, heavy, ponderous and arid, while "The Pilgrim's Progress" is perennially fresh and green - a root of life and vigour proceeding out of a dry ground. "The Pilgrim's Progress" certainly owes much of its vitality to its style, and Bunyan acquired his style from the English of the Genevan and Authorised versions of the Bible. He had no other models worth mentioning but the Bible was amply sufficient. Better model could not and cannot, /

cannot, be found anywhere, and from it, quite naturally and almost unconsciously, Bunyan learned to write. He certainly did not go to the Bible for style but he acquired his style from the Bible.

"The Pilgrim's Progress" may be fittingly described as a "well of English undefiled". The Anglo Saxon element in our speech greatly predominates in its pages. Words of Latin and Greek origin are notably infrequent though in one case,<sup>1</sup> greatly daring, and with the humble marginal acknowledgment "The Latin I borrow", Bunyan actually introduces a Latin phrase into his homely pages. This is the prescription of Mr Skill, the physician - "ex carne et sanguine Christi" - couched in Latin after the true medical style,. Bunyan having always an eye for verisimilitude in his tale. In the doctrinal treatises words of classical origin occur oftener, but the genuine Bunyan is characteristically Anglo-Saxon, and here he is at home and in his native element. Lengthy and sonorous periods abounding in polysyllables of foreign origin are not for him. This David cannot move freely in Saul's heavy armour. His sentences are neither cumbrous nor involved. He wields a style natural, artless, pellucid, picturesque. In short, /

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1. The Pilgrim's Progress. Part II. p. 297.

short he is a delight to read. All unconsciously - and without having any thought for style in itself - he finds himself a stylist of the first rank. Robert Louis Stevenson's faultless style is, on his own admission, the finished product of a laborious art which concealed art, but there is no art, open or concealed, in Bunyan's style. We cannot imagine Bunyan painfully seeking for the right word, and yet somehow it seldom failed him. It is the paradox of hedonism that happiness is to be found by those who seek her not. Shall we say that there is a similar paradox of style? If so, John Bunyan is a conspicuous illustration. Style was certainly not his chief end, but while in pursuits of matters of much higher moment, he, as certainly, achieved style.

The second element in the success of "The Pilgrim's Progress" to which reference was made, is its human appeal. Somehow it "finds" us, it moves, touches and grips us. Like Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner"<sup>1</sup> the author "holds" us "with his glittering eye" and we "cannot choose but hear". We are more than interested, we are enthralled by the simple story of the Pilgrim's experiences. There is something here which goes to the heart of humanity. It is remarkable /

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1. "The Oxford Book of English Verse" pp. 628-9.

remarkable that "The Pilgrim's Progress" has made itself a favourite with all the ages of man. It is one of the earliest books to which we are introduced in childhood. Long before we are capable of penetrating its spiritual meaning, it wins our love as something like a charming fairy tale. It thrills our boyish imagination as an exciting story of adventure, amply stocked with stirring exploits and hair-breadth escapes. Breathless suspense seizes us as we wait the issue of the dread conflicts with Apollyon and Giant Despair. Considered merely as a romance, "The Pilgrim's Progress" holds pre-eminent place. Long before the day of the novel, Bunyan displayed the qualities of a first-rate novelist. Parallels to "The Pilgrim's Progress" are not easy to find. Macaulay<sup>1</sup> brackets it in many respects with Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719). Perhaps the closest parallel however is the Don Quixote of Cervantés (1547-1616). That too, though not strictly allegorical in form is a picture of the struggles of a noble soul towards high ideals. But there is at least this difference between the two popular and classical master-pieces. The purely religious element which lies next to Bunyan's heart, may almost be said to be absent /

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1. Miscellaneous Writings and Speeches London 1889 p. 33. .



absent from the work of Cervantés. The latter is a moralist and an idealist of a very high order, while the former is first and foremost a Christian evangelist.

"The Pilgrim's Progress" appeals to humanity, because it is instinctively recognized as true to human life. We identify ourselves with the hero, and we feel that his struggles and dangers, his successes and failures are ours. He enlists and retains our sympathy because in his experiences we read the story of our own deepest spiritual life with all its aspirations and depressions. In spite of his stern Puritan creed, Bunyan is, by no means, lacking in humanity and in human sympathy. He would never have found his way to the heart of mankind, had not his own heart been sensitive and tender. He is not too remote from the life of mankind to be inaccessible to playful humour and melting pathos. He has a curious fondness for riddles and witticisms and delights in the pithy and sententious proverb. He is no stranger either to laughter or to tears, and when we see this, we feel drawn to him as one of ourselves. "The Pilgrim's Progress" is built upon a very definite and substantial foundation of dogma, but a great gulf separates it from the theological literature of its time, and no theological text-book of any time - be it from /

from the hand of a master - can hope to compete with it in general favour. The reason simply is that "The Pilgrim's Progress is eminently human. It is not a cold, impersonal, scientific treatise. Its qualities are such as endear it to the general heart of man. It is fresh, spontaneous, vivid, graphic, abounding in quaint and homely touches. One illustration, from among a host, may be cited. At the close of the First Part of "The Pilgrim's Progress", Bunyan describes the joyful and triumphal entry of the travellers into the Celestial City, to take their place amid the innumerable company of the Redeemed, and this is his comment:-<sup>1</sup> "which when I had seen, I wished myself among them". Could anything be simpler and happier, more true and more touching than these words? They voice the feeling of every sympathetic reader. They say just what should be said in such a finished and final manner as could not be improved upon.

John Bunyan like Robert Burns has indubitably reached the human heart. There are resemblances not a few between the tinker-preacher and the peasant-poet. Both were big-hearted men with wondrous powers of self-expression, else they could never have won the place they hold. But /

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1. The Pilgrim's Progress p. 211.

But Bunyan's appeal penetrates deeper than that of Burns, for, after all, man is essentially a religious, a spiritual being. When the noble and supremely momentous themes of religion are presented in attractive fashion, they cannot fail to win the interest of man, for there is no interest nor concern so vital to man's true well-being as theirs.

SECTION A :- SOURCES.

### SECTION A.

There are few who will grudge to John Bunyan the pre-eminent rank of genius. But this does not mean that, being heaven-born, his emergence on our planet is altogether unaccountable. Questions of origin, time and place have their relevance even in such exceptional cases as his. In common with the obscurest of writers he too has his background and his history. They help the student to understand, if not to explain him, and in any exposition and estimate of his teaching they cannot be disregarded.

To take an example, his frequent references to religious persecution cannot be rightly appraised, if we forget that he lived in a persecuting age when toleration, the boast of our times, was a virtue uncomprehended and unpractised. His long confinement in prison and his constant anticipation, for many years, of a martyr's death were facts of his history which were bound to tinge the colour and to modify the trend of his thought and work. A knowledge of the political and religious struggles of his time would seem to be a necessary equipment for the understanding of Bunyan and his teaching - all the more so as he was no mere recluse living his life and dreaming his /

his dreams apart from contemporary controversy. He probably considered himself a man of action rather than of thought. The religious world of his day was sharply and bitterly rent and divided - even to the death, and Bunyan did not pose as a neutral. In the theological warfare waged around him his tastes and affinities were with the attitude of Luther rather than that of Erasmus. There was never any doubt as to the side which he had espoused. He did not spend his days aloof from the public interests and contentings around him. He immersed himself in them and fought and suffered for his own side to the utmost. The context of Bunyan's life is of more than ordinary value for those who seek to elucidate the text of his works.

The wider, therefore, and deeper our acquaintance with the sources of Bunyan's theology and the environment and experiences of his life, the truer is likely to be our understanding of the content of his doctrine. The sources, if we can trace and identify them, will undoubtedly shed light upon the finished product. In this section it is accordingly proposed to face such questions as these and to indicate the lines along which they may be answered:- Whence was Bunyan's theology, his Weltanschauung derived? What /

What was the soil in which he grew? Who were his school-masters and what his schools? These questions we cannot hope to answer in anything like detail; we can furnish only a rough outline of a very extensive territory. We propose to arrange our scanty material under the following six divisions:- (1) His Times, (2) His Upbringing and Education, (3) Personal Influences, (4) His Reading, (5) His Theological and Ecclesiastical Position, (6) The Personal Equation and the Experiences of his Life. An exhaustive treatment of these topics would be an admirable prelude to the study of Bunyan's teaching, but the prelude must not be developed out of proportion to the main theme, and this must be our excuse for a brief and rapid handling of the sources.

#### (1) His Times.

John Bunyan was a child of the 17th century, within which his life was wholly included without overlapping either into its predecessor or successor. He was born in its second quarter when it had already passed its first youth; and he died in its fourth quarter when it had still a full decade to run. There is, no doubt, a certain arbitrariness in parcelling out the continuous and unbroken field of time into equal periods, and labelling each /

each century with definite characteristics of its own. Still, such demarcations are a necessary evil, not without considerable value; and, in Bunyan's case, where the century division cuts so clean, we feel no little satisfaction in being able to assign to him his own indubitable position. If the man of the 17th century in England had any distinctive features or any special outlook on life, then we may expect with confidence to find these in Bunyan, for there is no question of the century to which he belongs.

Bunyan was born in 1628, three years after the accession of King Charles I. He was thus ushered into life at the dawn of a portentous and unexampled epoch in British political history. It was a period in our annals to which the overwrought epithet 'unique' may be applied without exaggeration. The execution of the monarch in 1649 was an extreme measure, altogether without precedent in our records. There are those who represent that deed as the one lapse from our characteristic national sanity into madness, the one occasion when we jettisoned our common-sense and our belief in the 'gradualness' of reform and staked our all upon bloody revolution. There are others whose plea is that desperate diseases require desperate remedies, and that the antecedent provocation amply /



amply justified the drastic procedure. Whatever be our view, the step taken was admittedly a last resort, and it discloses a state of affairs well-nigh desperate in the body politic.

So fierce was the struggle and so determined were the antagonists that the question at issue could not be decided by the orderly methods of debate and vote. The arena was transferred from parliament to the battle-field and the arbitrament of the sword. Civil war - that direst of national calamities - was let loose on the land. No less a victim than the head of the state himself had to be sacrificed if the strife were to end and if peace were to be restored. The condition of public opinion in the country in these extraordinary circumstances can be scarcely imagined much less described. The temperature of the nation in those days may well have touched its highest point of fever, excitement and passion. Never before or since has our stolid people condemned its constitutional ruler to death.

Bunyan saw the British throne, which had weathered the storms of a millenium, totter and fall. He saw old-established institutions demolished, and new and strange experiments in constitution-making. His indeed were times /

times of which it is little to say that they were unsettled. He lived through the decade of the common-wealth, that one brief period when our country was, nominally at least, a republic, then a phenomenon almost unknown in the world. He saw the ancient throne restored in the person of Charles II, amid wild and ecstatic hopes for the future; and he saw these hopes disappointed and frustrated. He saw the violent swing of the pendulum from the sternness and restraint of Cromwellianism and Puritanism to the looseness and licentiousness of the Restoration. When he first knew his beloved Puritanism, it was in opposition to the prevalent order of things. Then he saw it in its golden age of ascendancy and prestige under Cromwell. Then again he saw it under the cloud of disfavour and persecution. Later still he saw it tolerated - but with a grudge. He saw it in all its vicissitudes from the throne of power to the scaffold of shame. Among the portents of his time are to be included the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London (1665 and 1666). He died on the eve of the expulsion from the throne, of James II. During his life the grim struggle of Crown versus Parliament and People, of Absolutism versus Constitutional Liberty was being fought out with unrelenting fierceness, till at last the pet Stuart /

Stuart theory of the Divine Right of Kings was finally exploded and overthrown. His birth-year was the year of the Royal assent to the Petition of Right - the first success of the popular cause in the deadly duel, a success wrung from a reluctant monarch, a success rendered illusory by his characteristic failure to honour his promises.

Bunyan's death-year was the year of the eve of the Revolution Settlement when the lengthy political and religious struggle against the Stuart régime was decided and ended with the overthrow of a tyrannical, and the introduction of a constitutional, monarchy. Only some two months before William of Orange landed in Torbay, John Bunyan had died in London. Like Moses he traversed the wilderness with his people and passed away on the threshold of the Promised Land.

Bunyan certainly saw history in the making. His life synchronises with one of the stormiest and most eventful periods in the annals of Britain. His indeed were troublous times. There were few foreign entanglements and embroilments. The foe was not abroad but at home. The nation was grievously divided against itself. It had to pass through the terrific ordeal of Civil War in the process of unifying itself and setting its house in order. It /

It is a "crowning mercy" that the menace of Napoleon did not arise till a full century after Bunyan's death. Had Napoleon appeared in the days of Charles I, only the sinking of all internal differences could have saved the nation.

Strife was the keynote of Bunyan's times - strife at its bitterest and intensest. Party spirit has, doubtless its own useful place and salutary function in political

economy. There will always be differences of opinion among thinking men, but this was strife in excelsis or, shall we say, in infimis. Ere, however, we censure Bunyan's contemporaries for their deadly and inveterate political and religious strife, two things are to be remembered. In the first place they lived before the age of toleration, this attitude of mind being altogether foreign to their mentality; and, in the second place, there are certain things which are not to be tolerated, and a good case can be made out for those who classed among things intolerable the tyranny of the Stuarts. It ill becomes us to do other than honour the men who won for us, at the price of their own blood our civil and religious liberties. The point, however, here is neither to justify nor to condemn the strife of those days, but merely to indicate that such was the environment in which Bunyan /

Bunyan lived and moved.

The struggle was both political and religious, for politics and religion in those days were closely intertwined. There was warfare between Crown and Parliament and there was warfare between Episcopacy on the one side and Puritanism, Independency and Presbyterianism on the other. The Crown and the Church were allies, making common cause against Parliament and the Dissenters and Presbyterians. Moreover, it was the time of the Covenants and the Covenanters in Scotland, but there the strife was more predominantly theological and religious centring around opposing forms of Church-worship and Government. Persecution and the persecuting spirit were rampant both in England and in Scotland, and when the persecuted won the upper hand, they were usually not slow to turn the tables on the former persecutor. There was little neutrality in these days. Men took their side definitely and fought for it obstinately, neither asking nor giving quarter. They believed in their cause and fought and died for it, refusing to admit that anything could be said for the other side. They seemed to be visited by no misgivings that the position they had assumed might prove to be mistaken. The day of the reconciler and mediator had not /

not yet dawned, and the work of such peace-lovers and peace-makers as Robert Leighton was as seed cast upon the waters destined to bear fruit only after many days.

Inevitably Bunyan was drawn into the surrounding whirlpool of strife. In early youth<sup>1</sup> (1644-45) he served as a soldier in the Parliamentary army, when certain narrow escapes made their mark upon him. His military experience he turned to literary account long afterwards in "The Holy War". Throughout his works he displays a knowledge, remarkably full and accurate, of military, and also of legal, technical terms. He fought both on the battle-field and in the law-court; and he consequently acquired an intimate acquaintance with the tactics and phraseology of both circles. He was by no means oblivious and careless of the course of contemporary events. By nature he was not the man to shirk the contentions and controversies of his time.

Yet he was no fire-eating republican and revolutionary. "I do<sup>2</sup> confess myself" he says "one of the old-fashion professors that covet to fear God and honour the King." He came to be much less concerned with political freedom /

1. Brown Vol. I. p. 43.

2. Offor Vol. II p. 45, 74.

freedom than with the "liberty of prophesying". He had no grudge against monarchy as such, so long as he was left free to worship God in the manner that to him seemed right. He was content to live peaceably under the reigning King, so long as that potentate did not do violence to his religious convictions. Thus it was almost solely the religious aspect of the great struggle that interested Bunyan; but here he was touched to the quick. In this sphere he was a protagonist. In Scotland his place would indubitably have been in the foremost ranks of the Covenanters. In England he committed himself to a lengthy and determined opposition to the legal authorities; and in the end it was they that yielded, for death alone could have silenced Bunyan, and that final infliction, though sometimes apparently imminent, never actually descended upon his head. For his religious convictions he suffered all but the extreme penalty of the law. His imprisonment of twelve years was part of the heavy price he paid. His was certainly not a merely academic interest in theological and religious questions. They were the supreme practical interest of his life, and, in this province, he would on no account tolerate interference nor bow to the application of superior force. The times demanded action at least /

least as much as reflection, and Bunyan was equal to the demand. His enforced confinement has proved itself a classic example of the curse turned into a blessing. Had he found himself free to engage in pastoral duty and preaching, together with occasional theological polemics, these would have engrossed his whole energy, and the leisure and opportunity to write "The Pilgrim's Progress" would have been denied him. The man of action and controversy was, in the Providence of God, shaped on the anvil of adverse circumstances into a man of meditation and thought; the unlettered rustic was transformed into a literary genius. The seclusion that he avoided was thrust upon him, the seclusion necessary for the production of his immortal work. He was withdrawn for a period from the field of noise and strife that he might catch the higher voices and the higher visions, and convey their messages to the world.

The 17th century in Britain was a period of storm and stress, yet it contrived to accomplish notable literary and theological work. It was the Golden Age of Puritanism, in whose galaxy the star of Bunyan shines conspicuous. Another eminent Puritan of the time, though not a professional theologian, was John Milton, whose rank as a poet in the English /



English language is reckoned by many to be second only to that of Shakespeare. Milton and Bunyan were almost contemporary, the former being only twenty years senior to the latter. For almost half a century, previous to Milton's death in 1674, their careers ran side by side. But it seems unlikely that Milton ever heard of Bunyan whose masterpiece saw the light only the year after the poet's death. Though so near to each other in time and in sympathy, there is no evidence that either touched or influenced the other. Unlike Bunyan, Milton was an erudite and finished classical scholar. "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained" are together a magnificent epic, stupendously conceived and not unworthily elaborated. They are the work of a lofty poetical genius, displaying daring flights of imaginative power. They move on a plane of grandeur and sublimity. Could anything be more unlike the humble and homely "Pilgrim's Progress"? And yet the masterpieces of Milton and Bunyan are fundamentally akin, In both the religious interest is supreme. Each discourses in its own way on the same theme - the story of the sin and salvation of man, told, however, from different points of view. But Milton, with all his gifts and all his /

his advantages, secures but a small constituency and makes but a limited appeal compared with Bunyan. The aloofness of the scholar often leaves men cold, while the human touch of the unlettered tinker finds its unerring way to the heart. To both Milton and Bunyan is unanimously awarded the rank of genius, but even amid geniuses there are diversities of gifts.

Among the religious forces of the 17th century the work of the Westminster Assembly of Divines (1643-1649) calls for special notice. The Confession of Faith, one of the publications of that assembly, still holds rank, after nearly three hundred years, as one of the authorised standards of the Scottish Presbyterian Churches. It was a task of great difficulty and delicacy to which the Divines set themselves, and they were guided to an issue of wonderful success. No hand has yet been lifted up against the Confession, though the terms of subscription have been altered and eased. It still stands as a monument of antiquity to which high honour is deservedly paid, but its interpretation of Biblical doctrine is no longer accepted on all points as final. Its grip and influence on present-day religious life are not to be compared with those of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress".

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The work<sup>1</sup> of the Westminster Divines was characteristic and typical of the 17th century. Its predecessor was the century of the Reformation, when men came into a new heritage. The next stage was to take stock of that heritage. The Reformation leaven was still actively working but was now beginning to settle down into stereotyped forms. Theologians occupied themselves in "cataloguing, valuing and arranging" what had come into their hands. 'The Reformers had opened the mine and now their successors were securing and smelting the ore.' It was an age of great theological systems and system-building.- the period of "Protestant Scholasticism" when our traditional orthodoxy was given definite shape. In Bunyan's doctrinal treatises there speaks for the most part, the 17th century dogmatist. In his allegories he allows himself greater freedom. He combines the dogmatic sternness and harshness of his time with a spontaneity and a charm which are his own. His great work is a consummate flower rooted in dry and unpromising ground. It is impossible to explain it wholly in terms of its environment. Of necessity Bunyan was the child of his age /

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1. For the line of thought followed in the first half of this paragraph together with certain turns of expression the writer is indebted to a lecture given by Prof. H.R. Mackintosh to his students in Edinburgh in October 1926.

age. Yet much of what is best in him is foreign to his age and springs direct from his God-bestowed individuality.

(2) His Upbringing and Education.

Bunyan's origin was unquestionably humble. He entered upon life, dowered with a minimum of external advantages, and apparently doomed all his days to obscurity and struggle. If he was to accomplish anything, it could only be by dint of native talent and indomitable spirit. Heavily handicapped he entered the lists, and it is little short of a miracle that he should have achieved fame.

He was a child of what is known as the lower working classes. His parentage was poor, but apparently industrious and respectable. The stock from which he sprang had long been resident in the district of Elstow, near the town of Bedford. His grandfather, Thomas Bunyan, was, according to his own description in his will a "pettie<sup>1</sup> chapman" or 'small village trader'. His father, also named Thomas, answered to the occupation<sup>2</sup> of a "braseyer", to which his famous son was also trained. It is scarcely necessary to point out that if John Bunyan is to be labelled /

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1. Brown. Life. Vol. I. p. 31.

2. Brown. Life. Vol. I. p. 35.

labelled a "tinker", the word must be understood as severed from its popular Scottish connection with gipsies. There was nothing nomadic about Bunyan's early calling. Most of his work would be done at the forge adjoining his cottage home, and his wanderings would take him no farther than the farms of the surrounding district in his quest for utensils in need of repair.

The preface to one of Bunyan's earliest works - "A few Sighs from Hell" (1658) - bears the initials 'J.G.' which are now<sup>1</sup> held to represent not John Gifford, his well-known teacher and guide in matters religious, but probably John Gibbs, pastor in Newport Pagnell. This preface in all likelihood the work of a contemporary, makes the following admission:- "his<sup>2</sup> outward condition and former employment was mean". It is not likely that such language would be used by one who desired to advertise Bunyan, unless it were the irrefutable truth. Such assertions, when they find a place in an apology for an author and in a commendation of his writing, though they may increase the reputation of one already famous, can scarcely help to win the popular favour for one as yet unknown.

Bunyan /

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1. Brown. Life Vol. I. p. 115.  
2; Offor Works. Vol. III. p. 672.

Bunyan himself makes no effort to glorify his origin. So unmeasured is his disparagement that we instinctively hesitate to take it at its face value. To modern taste it almost savours of disloyalty to his race. "For<sup>1</sup> my descent, then, it was as is well known by many, of a low and inconsiderable generation; my father's house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land." Doubtless, behind these words there is the noble intention - dominant in all Bunyan's works - to magnify the grace of God Who had raised him from the dunghill - Moreover, it is only the poverty and lowliness of his origin that Bunyan brings into the limelight, and these, after all, are despised only by those whose scorn is unworthy of regard. In his picture of his early home nothing is revealed that any right-thinking person need be ashamed of.- He was too good a son to make any reflections upon its moral character, even if such had a foundation in fact. We know that the struggle for existence was a grim reality to its inmates, and that the daily bread was hardly won.

Bunyan's schooling was scanty. His parents evidently /

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1. Grace Abounding - Ofor Works. Vol. I. p. 6.

evidently had some notion of the value of education and of their duty to their son in that respect. "But<sup>1</sup> yet" he writes, "notwithstanding the meanness and inconsiderableness of my parents, it pleased God to put it into their hearts to put me to school, to learn both to read and write; the which I also attained according to the rate of other poor men's children". Bunyan's education rudimentary though it was, was not achieved without self-denial on his parents' part, which is all the more creditable to them in that it was an obligation voluntarily assumed and not enforced by law. They did not make their poverty an excuse, as many in those days must have done, for failing to ensure that their child would not be launched into the world without being able to read and write.

The mastery of these essentials, and little more, makes up the sum of Bunyan's early education. He was destitute of classical training. He never came near the portals of a university. Yet his limitations proved to be no unmixed curse. Anglo-Saxon English is the weapon he wields to perfection, and he wields it all the more efficiently and dexterously because he knows no other. Though /

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1. "Grace Abounding" - Offor. Works p. 6.

Though we grant freely that the classics furnish a valuable mental discipline not to be secured elsewhere, though we even maintain that literary scholarship cannot be reared upon any other foundation, yet it must be acknowledged that Bunyan would have gained little and lost much by any such acquisition. The freshness of "The Pilgrim's Progress" would be irremediably soiled, and its glory would forthwith depart, if its narrative were to be couched in the style of Johnson's "Rasselas". The true Bunyan is naive and artless, and these rare and charming qualities would have been endangered, if not destroyed, by additional learning.

As with the lowliness of his early surroundings, so with the scantiness of his equipment of scholarship; Bunyan makes no attempt to conceal either of these handicaps. He makes no apology for his lack of learning, but rather parades it and glories in it, with more than a dash of defiance in his demeanour. Indeed he seems to be fond of posing as more unlettered than he actually is. It is his "way", except when he is on his defence, to talk disparagingly of most things connected with himself. Blunt and straightforward though he is, we do well to hesitate to take him, without question, at his own valuation /.



valuation. His youthful schooling was certainly meagre, but then his education and his thinking did not end there.

These were extensively supplemented in after-life; and the twelve years in confinement furnished opportunities for reading and study which were diligently utilised. He acquired a knowledge of the English Bible which has probably never been excelled; and this, in itself, was a liberal education.

But, a classical scholar he never became; indeed, the opportunity to become such, seems never to have been within his reach. His references to Plato and Aristotle seem unnecessarily contemptuous and probably savour somewhat of "sour grapes", as for instance the following:-  
 "Reader,<sup>1</sup> if thou do find this book empty of fantastical expressions, and without light, vain, whimsical, scholar-like terms, thou must understand it is because I never went to school to Aristotle, or Plato, but was brought up at my father's house, in a very mean condition, among a company of poor countrymen." The sarcastic and bitter spirit behind these words is scarcely to be commended.<sup>2</sup>  
 Bunyan's ideal of "scholarship" is so low and so inadequate that /

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1. Offor. Works Vol. I. p. 495.

2. Cf. Vol. III p. 695.

that one is driven to conclude that he can scarcely ever have met a true scholar. Elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> after quoting St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians (II: 8) where the Apostle cautions his readers lest they suffer themselves to be 'spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, and rudiments of the world, and not after Christ', he goes on to attack "You who muzzle up your people in ignorance with Aristotle, Plato, and the rest of the heathenish philosophers, and preach little, if anything, of Christ rightly." Scholar was a title to which Bunyan could lay no claim and which he affected to despise. He pays no outward homage to John Knox's ideal of an educated ministry, but in this respect, his practice was better than his theory, for, if he was no scholar, he was at least an assiduous reader, and he diligently cultivated whatever fields of knowledge were open to him. It is not without significance that the first glimpse of his "Pilgrim" reveals him to us with "a book in his hand". There was a lore of his own in which Bunyan was deeply versed, but this lore of his was in no sense academic. The preface<sup>2</sup> to his earliest publication - "Gospel Truths Opened" (1656) written by John Burton, Minister at Bedford, contains the following quaint commendation of the new author:-

"This /

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1. Offor Works. Vol. III p. 716.

2. Offor Works. Vol. II p. 141.

"This man is not chosen out of an earthly, but out of the heavenly university, the Church of Christ ... .. He hath, through grace, taken these three heavenly degrees, to wit, union with Christ, the anointing of the Spirit, and experience of the temptations of Satan which do more fit a man for that mighty work of preaching the gospel, than all university learning and degrees that can be had."

Bunyan was a self-taught man with a rich endowment of native genius. To his schooling he owed nothing beyond the merest rudiments. To Milton in his 'Allegro', Shakespeare is 'Fancy's child, warbling his native wood-notes wild". Whether this description fits Shakespeare or not, it applies aptly to Robert Burns and to John Bunyan. Both were 'Fancy's children', dowered with lofty imaginative gifts. Both were masters of the language of the common folk among whom they lived. In much they were vastly dissimilar, but in this they were alike that their work is essentially the welling-up of a fount of native genius. Both possessed a gift, rare and choice, which scholarship in itself could not impart. "May it please your majesty, if I could possess the tinker's abilities, I would gladly give in exchange all my learning." Thus Dr. John /

John Owen, the erudite Puritan Divine, to King Charles II. Bunyan was almost destitute of what we call education, and the marvel has always been that, with this serious disqualification, he has attained such a high place in the temple of literary fame. This is not the least remarkable of his achievements. How could an illiterate tinker conceive and pen "The Pilgrim's Progress"? His authorship is too well attested to furnish even the slenderest ground for any Baconian theory. We can only take refuge in the word 'genius', which, after all, explains nothing.

### (3) Personal Influences.

John Bunyan seems to have owed little to the personal influence of any of his great contemporaries. His century was not lacking in dominant figures both in the sphere of action and of thought, but it would be difficult to point to any of them that dominated Bunyan. His star does not revolve around some central luminary, nor does it find its place in the coterie of a constellation; it shines apart and alone. This, of course, so far as his own age and time are concerned. The great ones of the earth of his day are almost absent from his pages. It is never his concern to tell us with pride that it was his good fortune /

fortune or otherwise to meet one of them. It is not relevant to his purpose to inform us that they ever crossed his path. It seems only inevitable to conclude that they made little impression upon him.

Like "Jupiter" Carlyle, a century later (1722-1805) he left an autobiography. But how widely different the two documents! Carlyle's manuscript is the work of an alert and observant man of the world who, somehow, happened to be a Christian minister. It is a catalogue of the personalities, great and not so great, with whom he came into contact. It sheds a flood of light upon contemporary men and women and movements, as viewed from the angle of the author's standpoint, but as a history of his mental and, still more, of his spiritual life, it is disappointingly superficial. But with "Grace Abounding" precisely the reverse holds true. As a footnote to contemporary history, whether political, social or literary, its value is negligible; as a psychological and spiritual document, relating to the concerns of the individual soul, it holds highest rank. In its pages we look in vain for the illustrious names of these days. They are of no importance to Bunyan compared with John Gifford,<sup>1</sup> an obscure Puritan /

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1. Offor. Works Vol. I. p. 20.

Puritan Divine of his own town, and "three<sup>1</sup> or four poor women sitting at a door in the sun and talking about the things of God." Bunyan's scale of values was evidently fundamentally different from Carlyle's, and they would have applied the adjective 'influential' in a manner astonishingly dissimilar. The sturdy Puritan refuses to bow the knee to the idols of the moment in Vanity Fair. His character-sketches in "The Pilgrim's Progress" and "The Holy War" are, no doubt, to a large extent modelled upon contemporary types, as he saw them. In a few cases they may be portraits of contemporary individuals, but the identification is, in general, no more than conjectural, and it is difficult to penetrate beneath the disguise. Speaking generally, the great ones of the day are excluded from Bunyan's pages, and when they do appear it is almost always behind the veil of anonymity.

In Bunyan's domestic circle two individuals made a distinct impression on his religious life. These were the wife of his youth, and, in later days, his blind daughter. His parents saw to it, that, as an infant, he was duly baptized, but beyond this - which in itself means little enough - we have no evidence as to their spiritual influence /

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1. Offor - Works. Vol. I. p. 10.

influence upon their son. He gives them little more than a bare mention, but we are not warranted in building anything unfavourable upon the argument from silence.

As a youth of something like twenty, he married in or about the year 1649. To the unnamed and unknown woman who became his wife he records his great indebtedness. Clearly she counted for much in his moral and spiritual life, and her influence was decidedly on the side of the angels. She brought into his waywardness some element of stability. She helped to awaken in him "some desires to religion". She introduced him to the wonderful world of books, and made a reader of him. Intellectually, morally and spiritually, she was the means of arousing him to newness of life. He did not feel that he had, as yet, found the way of salvation. Many a dread experience of doubt and fear, many a fierce conflict yet lay before him. But, at least, he had now begun to understand what it is to seek. The story is best told in his own words<sup>1</sup>:- "Presently after this, I changed my condition into a married state, and my mercy was to light upon a wife whose father was counted godly. This woman and I, though we came together as poor as poormight be, not having so much household stuff as a dish or /

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1. Offor. Works Vol. I. p. 7.



or spoon betwixt us both, yet this she had for her part, The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven, and The Practice of Piety, which her father had left her when he died. In these two books I should sometimes read with her, wherein I also found some things that were pleasing to me; but all this while I met with no conviction. She also would be often telling of me, what a godly man her father was, and how he would reprove and correct vice, both in his house, and amongst his neighbours, what a strict and holy life he lived in his day, both in word and deed". The first result<sup>1</sup> of his wife's influence was to lead Bunyan to identify himself with a type of religion which he afterwards came to regard as superstitious, legalistic and unevangelical, but, even so, it was a preparation for the full enlightenment that was to come. He had to be convinced of the impossibility of attaining salvation by the works of the law, before he was ready to accept the Gospel.

At the time of his imprisonment nothing on earth was dearer to him than his blind daughter, "who", he says<sup>2</sup>, "lay nearer my heart than all I had besides". To part from her was a grievous wrench. To think of the privations and sufferings his confinement would bring upon her, was /

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1. Offor, Works. Vol. I. p. 7.

2. Ibid. p. 48.



was well-nigh intolerable. All unconsciously to herself, she was one of the greatest humanizing influences in his life, helping to soften some of the asperities of his stern creed, helping him to give something of its true place and value to the love of God. In one of his latest writings<sup>1</sup>, when discoursing of Christ's care as Head for the individual members of His Body, he says, "I will add, the infirm member is most cared for, most pitied, most watched over to be kept from harms, and most consulted for". That sentence is a transcript of his own domestic experience. His love for his blind daughter unquestionably made him a better theologian, and gave him a deeper insight into the love Divine. Among the personalities who made him what he became, she is worthy of mention, because of the high place she held, on his own admission, in his affections. All unwittingly she taught him to lay greater stress on the compassionate love of God - a lesson which the rigorous Calvinist greatly needs to lay to heart.

Bunyan's school-masters, like his schools, call for no lengthy enumeration. There is no dubiety as to who was his Gamaliel. Only one possible claim to this high honour survives for consideration, and the name of the humble master /

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1. Ibid. p. 674.

master owes its preservation from oblivion to the fame of his illustrious pupil. For two short years Bunyan sat at the feet of one John Gifford, and waited upon his ministry at Bedford. This Gifford did not pretend to be a theological teacher of eminence, nor was he in any sense an ecclesiastical leader. He was simply a member of the ordinary rank and file of the Puritan ministry. His field of influence was apparently very circumscribed and obscure, and he probably aspired to nothing more conspicuous than the spiritual guidance of his little and simple flock. But he had the essential qualification of a clear understanding and a firm grip of evangelical truth together with a sympathetic heart and a wide spiritual experience; so that when the storm-tossed soul of Bunyan took refuge under his ministry, and appealed to him for pilotage, he was not found wanting. To him more than to any other of his contemporaries it may be confidently asserted that Bunyan owed his soul. Gifford may not have turned many to righteousness, but Bunyan was of the number, and Bunyan is a host in himself. More than any other human being whom he met, Gifford has the best title to be called Bunyan's master, and yet Gifford was no teacher of new truth, but nothing more than the channel through which the old truths found entrance into Bunyan's soul.

John /

John Gifford's ministry<sup>1</sup> at Bedford lasted for five years - from 1650 till his death in 1655; and it was only in 1653<sup>2</sup> that Bunyan became definitely associated with his church. The period of their intercourse was brief, but the impress left upon Bunyan was indelible. His introduction<sup>3</sup> to Gifford came about after this fashion. Being in great spiritual perturbation and distress he unburdened himself to certain poor but sympathetic souls at Bedford, whose tranquillity he envied and longed to attain. These directed him to Mr Gifford who, in Bunyan's own words "took occasion to talk with me", and "invited me to his house where I should hear him confer with others about the dealings of God with the soul." Gifford's own spiritual career had been stormy, and, out of the plenitude of his own experience and the depths of his own fellow-feeling, he was able to deal helpfully with Bunyan. His early life,<sup>4</sup> as an officer in the Royalist Army had been reckless and dissolute, and he had plumbed the depths of despair ere he passed through the crisis of deliverance at conversion, and tasted of the joy of the forgiveness of sins. Such a man might be safely trusted not to heal slightly /

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1. Brown. Life. Vol. I. p. 90.
  2. Ibid. p. 93.
  3. Offor. Works. Vol. I. p. 15.
  4. Bunyan Characters Vol. I. p. 11.

slightly the hurt of John Bunyan. He did his utmost to impart to his bewildered and tormented inquirer the secret of his own peace, and he did not labour in vain.

In the cure of souls there is nothing more difficult and delicate than personal dealing in matters spiritual. For one minister who will face that ordeal and to whom it is given to speak in private the seasonable and needed word of light and comfort to a soul in distress, there are a hundred who will cheerfully enter the pulpit and preach at large. The latter task is no doubt, exacting enough, but it is simplicity itself compared with the former. It is a searching test of the reality and power of the minister's own spiritual life and convictions - a test into which only a fool would needlessly run but from which no true pastor dare shrink when it is imposed upon him. "The Pilgrim's Progress" might never have been written if John Gifford had failed Bunyan here, if the hungry soul, looking up, had been sent empty away. Bunyan's difficulties did not end when he met Gifford, but at least he was now materially helped towards their solution, and that in much more than a purely negative way. He was not set off upon a false scent which would only lead to disillusionment and disappointment. He was headed off in what he /

he afterwards came to be convinced was the right direction.

Somewhat later he writes<sup>1</sup>:- "At this time also I sat under the ministry of holy Mr Gifford, whose doctrine, by God's grace, was much for my stability. This man made it his business to deliver the people of God from all those false and unsound rests that, by nature, we are prone to take and make to our souls. He pressed us to take special heed that we took not up any truth upon trust - as from this, or that, or any other man or men - but to cry mightily to God that He would convince us of the reality thereof, and set us down therein, by His own Spirit, in the holy Word .... This was as seasonable to my soul as the former and latter rain in their season. ... But, oh! now, how was my soul led from truth to truth by God! even from the birth and cradle of the Son of God to His ascension and second coming from heaven to judge the world. Truly, I then found, upon this account, the great God was very good unto me; for to my remembrance, there was not anything that I then cried unto God to make known and reveal unto me but He was pleased to do it for me; I mean not one part of the gospel of the Lord Jesus, but I was orderly led into it." Doubts and fears, indeed, recurred /

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1. Offer - Works Vol. I. p. 20.

recurred in after-days, but the stable foundation, laid, under God, by Gifford, was never afterwards dislodged. Upon his fundamentals Bunyan built his own Christian life and reared his own Christian teaching.

Dr. Alexander Whyte in his Bunyan Characters<sup>1</sup> maintains that the prototype of Evangelist in "The Pilgrim's Progress" is none other than John Gifford. "Bunyan<sup>2</sup> himself is the man in rags, and Gifford is the evangelist who comes to console and to conduct him". This may very well be. The services which Evangelist renders to Christian are identical with those which Gifford rendered to Bunyan. Evangelist is the ideal Christian minister directing the sinner in his alarm and danger to the only true path of deliverance and salvation, sternly reproving him when he wanders therefrom, and solicitously preparing him that he may play the man in the dangers ahead. The third and last appearance of Evangelist<sup>3</sup> when Christian and Faithful were about to face the ordeal of Vanity Fair was greeted by them with this cordial and affectionate salutation, into which we may well read Bunyan's personal tribute of gratitude and love to John Gifford, his Evangelist:- "Welcome, welcome /

1. Vol. I. p. 10

2. Ibid. p. 13.

3. "The Pilgrim's Progress" p. 113.

welcome, my good Evangelist (said Christian); the sight of thy countenance brings to my remembrance thy ancient kindness and unwearied labouring for my eternal good. And a thousand times welcome, said good Faithful. Thy company O sweet Evangelist, how desirable it is to us poor Pilgrims".

#### (4) His Reading.

Among the influences which moulded the thought of John Bunyan a high place must be given to his reading. Whatever other seminaries may have shut their gates against him, he at least found admittance to the great University of Books, and there he became, in his own special field, an assiduous student. Such culture and learning as he came to possess, if not extensive in range, was at least intensive in depth and thoroughness. The classics, as we have seen, were to him a closed door; science had not yet come to her own, and he never became widely read in the general literature of his own country. We find in him no trace of enthusiasm for belles lettres as such. Even had opportunity offered, his tastes and inclinations did not lie in that direction. Literature in itself did not appeal to him. It was only the distinctively religious element in literature /

literature that attracted him, and by this he was fascinated and enthralled. The Seventeenth Century in England was preceded by the Golden Age of the great Elizabethans who left an immortal legacy behind them, but there is little evidence that Bunyan claimed any share in this inheritance. He had no appreciation and probably no knowledge of William Shakespeare. He did not adorn his pages with quotations from the English classics of prose or poetry. These treasures he did not bring forth out of his store, for the very good reason that he had never accumulated them and that he possessed them not.

Yet, questions of literary form could scarcely have been altogether irrelevant to a born stylist like Bunyan. He relished the pithy proverb; he had pleasure in producing a well-turned phrase. It is significant that he even tried his hand as a versifier, and occasionally, with no little aptness and success. He had a musical ear for verbal cadences. Though he might not have admitted it, he was instinctively an artist and a craftsman in words - always impelled, of course, by the noble ambition to wield an instrument as effective as possible for the accomplishment of his lofty purpose. What models suggested and prompted his adventures in rhyme, it is hard to specify, and /



and this also applies, to some extent, to his great allegorical works. Bunyan is no hero-worshipper of the great literary figures. He owns no debt to any predecessor of his among them. He acknowledges obligation to scarce any book save one - the Bible - and to that book he owes all.

What books did Bunyan study? There is no doubt as to the answer to that question. It is almost correct to describe him as a man of one book - the Bible. In the race to claim his interest the Bible came first, and any others, so far behind as to count for little indeed in comparison. Among books the Bible had for Bunyan no rival and no competitor. It stood peerless, in a class by itself, always to be reverently regarded as the inspired word of God. It dominated his life like a single towering mountain-peak in a flat country. Its influence upon him was overwhelming and all-pervading. He did not of course confine himself exclusively to Holy Writ, but, so far as we know, he did confine himself in his serious reading to Biblical and religious themes. The other books he was interested in, were avowedly subsidiary to the Bible. They might be expositions and interpretations of Christian doctrine, like Luther's Commentary on the Galatians /

Galatians; or they might set forth the story of concrete Christian lives, like Foxe's "Book of Martyrs". In either case their fountain-head was Holy Scripture; otherwise they would not have commanded Bunyan's attention.

In all Bunyan's works evidence abounds of his marvellously intimate acquaintance with the Bible. We need no external evidence to state the fact in so many words; the internal evidence of every page of his writings is overwhelming. He was ignorant of the original tongues of Hebrew and Greek, but the two English translations then current - The Genevan Puritan Version (first published 1560) and the authorised Version (1611) were accessible to him. It is clear that he was a diligent and ardent student of the English Bible. It is the fashion to deny him the honourable title of scholar, but that is to ignore the patent truth that he was a Biblical scholar of rare proficiency, so far as it is possible for one without knowledge of Hebrew or Greek to qualify as such. If he studied little else and read little else, he at least studied and read his Bible to some purpose. As a specialist in his own department of scholarship he has few equals. No writer is better equipped than he in knowledge of the contents of the English Bible, and this is, after all, no /

no mean or meagre endowment, but the most liberal of educations. With his Bible and Concordance in his hands Bunyan was well-furnished for his work; with other aids he could afford almost to dispense. He made it his business to study the Bible, and he qualified as an expert. His writings are well documented after the approved style of modern scholarship. His pages are studded with countless Scripture references. His aim seems to be to give Scriptural authority for every statement; as to other authority he troubles himself little. He knows the by-ways as well as the highways of the Bible, and is able to make ready and telling use even of obscure and unfamiliar passages. Such knowledge could have been the product only of long years of loving study. Style as well as thought he owed to the Bible; its noble Anglo-Saxon he made his own. He lived and moved and had his being in the atmosphere of the Bible. His mind and spirit were saturated with its language and its teaching. Apt illustrations and appropriate texts from Scripture came readily to his call whenever he wanted them. They crowded upon him with their treasures, of which he was able to make effective and beautiful use.

Bunyan's life brought him one great, albeit belated, opportunity /

opportunity for Biblical study. His twelve years' imprisonment, in the prime of manhood, undoubtedly did much to fill the lacuna in his early education. His stock of books in prison is said to have numbered only two, the following being the testimony of Charles Doe,<sup>1</sup> a friendly visitor and the publisher of certain of his works:-

"There also I surveyed his library, the least, but yet the best/<sup>that</sup>e'er I saw - the Bible and the Book of Martyrs".

Three activities helped to brighten the dreary years of his confinement; he read, he wrote, and he made "many hundred gross of long tagged laces" for sale. He advanced farther and farther towards the mastery of the contents of his tiny library; he penned several treatises, and like St. Paul he laboured with his hands for the support of himself, and not of himself alone but of his dependent family in addition. When his imprisonments were near an end, if not actually closed, he made the following declaration<sup>2</sup>:-

"I have not writ at a venture, nor borrowed my doctrine from libraries. I depend upon the sayings of no man. I found it (that which I have received from God) in the scriptures of truth, among the true sayings of God". In the /

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1. Offor. Works Vol. I. p. LV.

2. Brown. Life. Vol. I. p. 237.

the whole history of literature no man of letters was ever furnished with such a slender library as Bunyan; and yet it was ample for his needs. Its deficiencies proved no insurmountable impediment. It contained the one Book whose contents are inexhaustible. He could not "borrow" from others, because they were beyond his reach, and even had they lain to his hand, he would probably have left them unopened, because he was not interested in what may be called secular literature.

But the result is, by no means, to be deplored; rather the reverse. Bunyan was happy in the opportunity of his imprisonment. Without it he would not have accomplished his distinctive work. On his own acknowledgment it was a fruitful period in his spiritual life. "I never<sup>1</sup> had", he says, "in all my life so great an inlet into the word of God as now". "I have had sweet sights of forgiveness and of the heavenly Jerusalem. I have seen here that which, while in this world, I shall never be able to express". He was driven in upon the study of the Bible, and he was not slow to take advantage of the circumstance. The compulsory restriction of his field of reading and of activity /

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1. Offor. Works I. p. LVIII.

activity enabled him to cultivate all the more carefully the portion left to him. His attention was not distracted by the conflicting voices of many books. His energies were not dissipated. He was called to "come apart awhile" and to concentrate, and he obeyed the call. Few courses of study indeed have been more fruitful than Bunyan's years in jail. Leisure was then afforded him for meditation, for Bible-reading, and for writing; and to his diligent use of this enforced leisure he owes his renown. His persecutors unwittingly did Christendom a distinguished service when they withdrew him into solitude. They gave him his place in the glorious apostolic succession of St. Paul at Rome and St. John at Patmos; like theirs, his imprisonment produced the fadeless flowers of writings imperishable.

As the result of his strange training, Bunyan acquired, as we have seen, a rare, perhaps exceptional, knowledge of the English Bible. Its contents, from cover to cover, became intimately familiar to him. Again and again he surprises his reader with some new proof of the minuteness and thoroughness of his acquaintance with Biblical narrative and Biblical teaching. No man can come near to mastering the Word of God, but if any man can /

can be said to have known his Bible; his name is John Bunyan. To this text-book and manual he may be said to have restricted himself, and in it he became highly proficient. There remains the question of his interpretation and exposition of the Bible. Different and indeed antagonistic systems of theology have been professedly based upon this one book. Its authority has been invoked by opposing schools of thought. Calvinist and Arminian both resort to the Bible and find therein their armoury of defence and offence. In certain matters at least that great Book would seem to be capable, in different places, of different meanings, and, whether this be so or not, the fact is that it has been differently interpreted. Hence everything is by no means settled when we are told that Bunyan was a great Bible student and that he had a profound reverence for the Word of God. The further question arises. What did he find there? How did he interpret what he read? Which aspects of its many-faceted truth enkindled an answering gleam in his soul? These questions properly fall to be faced under the heading of the content of his theology; they carry us much farther than the mere mention and consideration of the sources of his teaching. At this point, therefore, let it suffice to /

to state that Bunyan's interpretation of Scripture was that of the Puritans of his time, and that his methods and principles of exegesis were those of his contemporaries.

Bunyan's reading may be conveniently grouped into two classes - the Bible and literature other than the Bible. The second division, as has been indicated, is cognate to the first. Its territory adjoins the other, and is little more than a continuation and an outgrowth of its great and dominating neighbour. There is little, if any sign that Bunyan, in his reading, ever strayed beyond the theological and religious fields of thought. He seems never to have been tempted to make an excursion into the realms of general literature. When we glance at the nature of the books he read, our first impulse is to label him as a narrow-minded man, whose spirit was resolutely closed against all interests save the solitary concern by which he was obsessed almost to the verge of morbidness and monomania. Critics will doubtless aver that the Horatian boast could never, by any possibility, be applied to him, and that, wherever he stands, his place is far removed from that of those who consider nothing human alien to them. This stern and unbending Puritan, we would /



would expect to be altogether out of sympathy with the broad and liberal culture and the genial and tolerant outlook of the humanist; and yet no writer excels him in the human touch. Somehow he finds his way to all hearts, because his themes, though apparently circumscribed, are in reality of universal interest. Every living soul has a deep, personal interest in life - its meaning, its struggles, its issue, and on these topics Bunyan speaks, out of his own heart and experience, in such a manner as to command attention. The Bible and life were his great teachers. After all, the Bible is "the Book of Humanity", and he who keeps close to the Bible will never find himself far from the heart of mankind. A true Bible-student like Bunyan, is ipso facto a man of liberal culture and far-reaching interests. One book alone and by itself provides all that is necessary for a true spiritual training. The study of a thousand other literary productions will not compensate for its neglect. He who has no knowledge of the Bible, whatever other qualifications he may hold, possesses no true title to be ranked as a man of culture. Ere we dismiss Bunyan's reading as woefully scanty and inadequate, let it be remembered that he had in his hands the one Book needful.

Other /

Other books, read by Bunyan, were all, as far as can be traced, of a distinctively religious character; and to this they owed their attractiveness in his eyes and their influence over him. First<sup>1</sup> in order of time we find "The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven" by Arthur Dent, an Essex Parish-minister, and "The Practice of Piety", by Lewis Bayly, bishop of Bangor - both, be it noted, clergymen of the Church of England. These books, though now unknown, enjoyed in those days a wide popularity. They were part of the modest dowry of the wife of Bunyan's youth, and to her must be ascribed the credit of giving him the beginnings of a taste for reading. It was she who set him afloat in his literary career, for no man can hope to become a writer without having first been a reader. Bunyan and his wife perused these books together. His praise of them is, by no means, enthusiastic. He found in them "some things"<sup>2</sup> that were somewhat pleasing to him; he rises to no greater height of eulogy than that rather qualified tribute. But, at least, they served as an introduction to his course of reading outside the Bible, and long years afterwards he deemed them worthy of mention in his /

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1. Brown. Life. Vol. I. p. 52.

2. Ofor Works. Vol. I. p. 7.

his autobiography. Doubtless, they left their mark upon him; the very title, "The Pilgrim's Progress" which Bunyan used full twenty years later, is just a more felicitous rendering of "The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven".

The next landmark in Bunyan's reading is perhaps the most conspicuous of all, apart from the Bible. In the pages of his writings there is a great dearth of world-renowned figures, even in the department of religion, apart from these of the Apostolic Church. Though he was a convinced Calvinist and a determined champion and defender of Calvinism, as witness his doctrine of election, he rarely mentions that great master's name. Failing to discover Calvin except anonymously we have little expectation of finding any personage of similar renown. Great, accordingly, are our surprise and delight to encounter on Bunyan's humble page no less a giant than Martin Luther. His reference to the great reformer in "Grace<sup>1</sup> Abounding" is supremely interesting and significant. When two men of genius cross each other's path, their meeting together and their attitude towards each other are well worth watching. Luther and Bunyan never met in the flesh - their respective births were separated from each other by a century and a half /

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1. Offor. I. 22.

half, - but they met in the spirit on the red-letter day when, in Bunyan's words, "The God in whose hands are all our days and ways, did cast into my hand, a book of Martin Luther", namely "his comment on the Galatians" - And it was clearly a meeting of kindred spirits. It is not Bunyan's way to wax eloquent in praise of the writings of man. So far as we know, he makes only one exception, and it is in favour of Martin Luther. Upon the "Commentary on the Galatians" he passes his solitary encomium, and it is indeed in no measured terms. If Bunyan was slow to praise, it was evidently not because of lack of the power to do so. "This, methinks", says he, "I must let fall before all men, I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians, excepting the Holy Bible, before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience." Such is the climax and conclusion of his testimony in the course of which we find the following:- "I found my condition, in his experience, so largely and profoundly handled, as if his book had been written out of my heart". It comforted Bunyan, amid his doubts and perplexities, to find that his stormy experience had been largely anticipated and closely paralleled by that of another. Like his own pilgrim<sup>1</sup> of whom he wrote in after /

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1. The Pilgrim's Progress p. 85.

after days, he rejoiced to discover that he was not without human fellowship in the dark valley. He joined hands with his great predecessor, and thenceforward like him he became a protagonist of the great Protestant doctrine of justification by faith, having first, like him also, found therein the only solid foundation for the salvation of his own soul. We must not allow Bunyan to be monopolised by John Calvin. Luther also should receive his due acknowledgment as a potent influence in Bunyan's life. It is unlikely that Bunyan ever became directly acquainted with Calvin's writings. The Genevan Reformer would probably be to him a shadowy personage, of whom all that he knew would be that he was the founder of that Calvinism which had filtered down through other channels until it reached himself. But it was different with Luther. Through the medium of that stalwart's own self-revealing book he got to know and love his personality. Luther's influence over Bunyan was much more direct and intimate than that of Calvin. Towards Luther Bunyan cherished feelings of gratitude and affection which had no place in his attitude, to Calvin, warmly though he espoused and faithfully though he defended the Calvinistic Creed.

It has been already mentioned that Foxe's "Book of Martyrs /

Martyrs" formed part, indeed half of Bunyan's prison library. The correct title<sup>1</sup> of this work is "The Acts and Monuments of the Church; containing the history and sufferings of The Martyrs: wherein is set forth at large the whole race and course of the Church from the primitive age to these later times with a preliminary dissertation on the difference between the Church of Rome that now is, and the Church of Rome that then was", by John Foxe. The author<sup>2</sup> was born in 1516 and died in 1587, and the first English edition of his book appeared in 1563. It is a monumental and colossal production, covering the whole period from the days of the primitive Church down to the author's own times. It is the fruit of wide, though not always accurate scholarship and erudition together with extraordinary and unwearied diligence. To read and much more, to master its contents would be a formidable undertaking. Whether Bunyan ever accomplished these feats we know not, but at least, there is evidence that he was not unacquainted with its pages. In his "Seasonable Counsel or Advice to Sufferers" (1684), which contemplates in particular the case of those under persecution there occurs the following sentence<sup>3</sup>:- "I do not say but that a man may /

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1. Edition. London 1838.

2. Article John Foxe - Chambers Encyclopaedia 1809.

3. Offer. II. 721.

may slip here, with Peter, Origen, Hierom, Cranmer, Baynham, Ormis, and other good folk". This catalogue of names - some of them illustrious and others unfamiliar together with his knowledge of the particular "slip" in their careers to which he refers, Bunyan owed in all likelihood to his reading of Foxe. Such is the inference of George Offor, Bunyan's editor, and we have no reason to doubt, if not its absolute correctness, at least its high probability.

It is quite natural that Bunyan should be attracted by a history of the martyrs, for he himself suffered persecution for his faith, and came near to sealing his testimony with his blood. He had a personal interest in the narrative, and felt himself one with the heroes in their struggles and sufferings. By their example and victory he would be mightily strengthened and inspired. Furthermore, from Foxe he would learn Church History and Protestant doctrine. His outlook and sympathies would be immeasurably widened. He would learn to think, not in terms of Bedfordshire or of England only, but of Christendom and of the world. His horizon would be extended to embrace not the seventeenth century only but the whole Christian era /

era. The great martyrologist helped to make Bunyan less parochial and provincial and more cosmopolitan; he helped to make his appeal universal. In the department of dogma, as well as of Church History, he, no doubt, profited by the instruction of Foxe. He acquired a firmer and more tenacious grip of the truths for which the martyrs died. The widening of his knowledge did not involve the slackening of his convictions. He did not give way to an easy-going tolerance falsely so called. He continued to hold his own position with even greater determination by reason of the enlightenment and the incentive which he received from Foxe. The story of the martyrs did not damp nor diminish his enthusiasm; on the contrary, it made the flame burn "higher and hotter". Extension of knowledge and deepening of conviction do not always advance side by side; indeed the one is often in the inverse ratio of progression to the other. But so it was not with Bunyan's reading of Foxe. He rose from the study of the "Book of Martyrs", both better instructed and more assuredly convinced.

We have now mentioned, so far as can be traced, most of the books which made a deep impression on Bunyan, and have therefore a claim to rank as sources of his teaching.

The /



The list is not numerous; but from references, more or less fugitive, throughout his works, we are led to suspect that his reading was much more extensive than would, at first sight, appear. He was acquainted with contemporary theological thought, and he did not hesitate to take up arms as a theological controversialist. He was well able to give a reason for the faith that was in him. Those who crossed swords with him in polemics found him quite capable of defending himself. He knew the arguments on both sides of the question and rarely failed to hold his own.

This could not have been attained without keen interest and close study. Mere deftness of wit does not make a controversialist; there must be a solid backing of accurate information. Bunyan's grasp of the intricacies of Puritan doctrine could scarcely have been secured had he never opened the pages of the great Puritan divines; and yet their names figure but rarely in his writings. Once<sup>1</sup> he mentions the scholarly and voluminous author, Dr. John Owen (1616-1683) one of the great figures of contemporary Puritanism. "The sober Dr. Owen" had apparently given something like an undertaking to write a commendatory "epistle" to one of John Bunyan's books, from /

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1. Offer II. 649.

from which he had seen fit to resile. Bunyan consoles himself with the reflection that "perhaps it was more for the glory of God that truth should go naked into the world, than as seconded by so mighty an armour-bearer as he". It looks as if there were a dash of irony in the words due to feelings of chagrin and disappointment; but, whether that be so or not, the passage is of value as proving explicitly that Bunyan was in touch with the leading Puritans of his time and their writings.

He could not have acquitted himself so effectively in controversy with the Quakers, had he not been fore-armed by some adequate knowledge of the Quaker position, and this applies to all his numerous controversies. He had the temerity to enter into fierce wordy warfare<sup>1</sup> with no less a personage than Edward Fowler who afterwards became Bishop of Gloucester. Fowler had published (in 1671) a book entitled "The Design of Christianity" which found its way to Bunyan in prison, who penned a spirited rejoinder in his "Defence of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith". This was replied to, professedly by a friend on Fowler's behalf, though probably Fowler himself had a hand /

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1. Brown. Vol. I. 182.

hand in the matter. The pamphlet<sup>1</sup> in question bore the unsavoury title "Dirt Wip't off: or a manifest Discovery of the Gross Ignorance, Erroneousness, and most un-Christian and Wicked Spirit, of one John Bunyan, Lay-Preacher in Bedford". Bunyan himself could indulge in very uncomplimentary and even abusive language towards an opponent - which was the fashion of these times - but, in this respect, if in no other, they were a match for him. His passage-of-arms with Fowler is noteworthy here as furnishing proof that Bunyan read, and was keenly interested in, contemporary theology. His equipment in the minutiae and subtleties of certain questions of doctrine could never have been acquired without reading of considerable range together with study of no ordinary depth and concentration. Names like these we find on his pages, Penn<sup>2</sup> the Quaker, Campion<sup>3</sup> the Jesuit, John Smith the Cambridge Platonist, John of Leyden<sup>4</sup> the Anabaptist and Dod (Author of "On the Commandments"). Some at least of these writers he knew at first hand.

An individual to whom he gives much more than a passing mention is a certain Francis Spira<sup>5</sup>, at the narrative of /

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1. Brown. Vol. I. p. 222.
  2. Offor. Vol. II. p. 333
  3. Ibid. p. 332.
  4. Ibid. II. 622.
  5. Offor. I. p. 26 with footnote.

of whose disastrous spiritual experience he shuddered in alarm and horror - terror-stricken lest a like doom might overtake himself. In "Grace Abounding" Spira occupies something like the space assigned to Luther - which is not to the credit of Bunyan's sense of proportion. Spira's story of remorse and despair was to Bunyan a lurid beacon of warning, and may well have suggested the picture of the man in the iron cage in the Interpreter's House.<sup>1</sup> In vivid and poignant language Bunyan describes the effect upon himself of Spira's melancholy and tragic tale, "that dreadful story of that miserable mortal" -; "a book that was to my troubled spirit as salt, when rubbed into a fresh wound; every sentence in that book, every groan of that man, with all the rest of his actions in his dolours, as his tears, his prayers, his gnashing of teeth, languishing and pining away under that mighty hand of God that was upon him, was as knives and daggers in my soul; especially that sentence of his was frightful to me, man knows the beginning of sin, but who bounds the issues thereof?" Such is only part of a passage characterised by passionate and terrific intensity, in which Bunyan strains to the utmost his powerful vocabulary, in order to convey some sense of his unutterable feelings of extreme disquietude /

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1. The Pilgrim's Progress. p. 46

disquietude and terror. It is evident that he pored over these black and tempestuous pages with an absorption not far removed from morbidness. It may have been a necessary stage in his spiritual development. If so, all that need be said is, that it was well for him, and it is well for us, that it was not permanent.

Bunyan's interest, not altogether healthy, in literature of Spira's type is further exemplified<sup>1</sup> in "The Life and Death of Mr Badman". There he draws upon Clarke's "Looking Glass for Saints and Sinners" and Beard's "Theatre of God's Judgments" which contained strange and lurid stories of what was regarded as Divine judgments. These books scarcely merit attention save for the fact that they came within the scope of Bunyan's reading, and were utilised by him. They show that he was by no means free from credulity and superstitious terrors. In this respect he was largely the child of his age, and is not fairly judged by the application of later standards. He was no more superstitious, indeed considerably less so, than the average man of his time. Vital religion and ignorant and enslaving superstition do not thrive side by side. Bunyan's religion was certainly vital, and, as such /

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1. Offor. Vol. II. p. 587.

such, it, more and more, tended to master the lingering remnants of superstition.

To sum up in a sentence, Bunyan, though not by any means an omnivorous reader, was a voluminous writer, and our general impression of the range of his reading is that, in his own special field, it was considerably more extensive than is generally supposed. If, as a student of books, his field was narrow, at least his allotted portion was diligently cultivated, and it was upon essentials that the full strength of his mental and spiritual powers was concentrated.

#### (5) His Theological and Ecclesiastical Position.

Bunyan's theological and ecclesiastical position is, on the whole, not hard to define. Without question, he conforms to the Puritan type. He was an imaginative genius dowered with rare and even original gifts; and yet he was no free lance. Such a claim he would have repudiated with emphasis and horror; such an ambition he would have rejected as a temptation of the devil. His Pegasus soars high, but is never allowed to get out of hand. We never find Bunyan playing fast and loose with Christian doctrine. He always keeps close to the truth of Holy Scripture as he understands it; he always bows to /

to the authority of God's Word, and recognises it as final. Nor does he feel himself hampered and fettered by its alleged restrictions. He never betrays any inclination or desire to break loose, and to lay the reins upon the neck of his imagination. The Puritan doctrine handed down to him he enthusiastically received and made his own. In it he finds ample scope for the exercise of his gifts. It gave him all the satisfaction and freedom which his mind and spirit could desire. To it he unhesitatingly and thankfully acknowledged that he owed the salvation of his soul.

John Bunyan was not from the first antipathetic or hostile to the Anglican Church, though he came to find his spiritual home in mature life, outside her walls. His baptism<sup>1</sup>, as an infant, is duly entered in the records of Elstow Parish Church, and his early youthful associations were with the mother Church of England, which was then almost co-terminous with the religious life of the country. It was not till the year 1660 when he was 32 years of age that the Restoration drove him into nonconformity and dissent. Some seven years previously he had identified himself with John Gifford's Church at Bedford, but that

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1. Brown. Vol. I. p. 38.

Church, though Congregational in polity, was then part of Cromwell's "elastic" Establishment.<sup>1</sup> It was the Act of Uniformity of 1661<sup>2</sup> imposing the Book of Common Prayer and making episcopal ordination of ministers indispensable, which gave birth and independent being to Puritanism and Dissent. In 1662 upwards of 2000 ministers of the Church of England "went out" - an event which was afterwards repeated in the history of Scotland in the Disruption of 1843. Doubtless the seeds of separation had been long latent in the soil. The Pilgrim Fathers, for reasons of conscience, had found it necessary to abandon England for America forty years before. But, for the most part, the semblance, at least, of unity and comprehensiveness had been hitherto maintained in the Church. It was in 1662 that the Rubicon of cleavage was definitely crossed when the High Church party, as we would call it, succeeded in making conditions intolerable for the Low.

Bunyan's sympathies from the time when he began to reflect seriously for himself, were always unmistakably with the Low or Evangelical or Puritan party; and when the Church of England threw Puritanism overboard, he promptly followed /

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1. Brown. Vol. I. p. 88.  
 2. Ibid. p. 192.



followed the cause he loved. His surroundings favoured his choice; Bedfordshire,<sup>1</sup> his native county and ancestral home, had long been a stronghold of Protestantism and Puritanism. Such were the traditions it had already accumulated. Moreover he came of Puritan stock. Bunyan did not strike out a line of his own in matters of theology and religion. The soil in which he grew and the atmosphere he breathed contributed materially to make him that which he became.

In his quest for spiritual satisfaction he made trial of the ordinary ritual of the Church of England, but he found it wanting. He passed through a lengthy period of exceptional storm and stress of spirit, ere he attained anything like settlement and peace for his soul - the record of which is preserved in the revealing pages of "Grace Abounding". His inward disquietude he found it hard indeed to pacify. Intellectual questions pressed for an answer, which was difficult enough for him or for any man to render. But his main problem did not lie there. His chief trouble was not scepticism of mind; it was his soul that cried out for healing and deliverance. The seat of his disease lay in his moral and spiritual nature, and he felt /

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1. Brown. Vol. I. p. 39.

felt that he needed a most drastic and thorough-going remedy. Outward religious observances in themselves he rejected as mere ceremonialism; they needed to be the expression of an inward reality, without which they were nothing better than organised hypocrisy. Even good works in themselves were unsatisfactory and illusory; when closely examined they were found to be honey-combed with imperfection. Moreover, they could not atone for previous failure and sin. Salvation, he came to be convinced, was not to be reached either by way of ceremonialism or of legalism. He was searching for a stable foundation on which to build, and everything crumbled beneath his feet. He could find nothing substantial enough to support his weight when he leaned upon it. He was a prey to uncertainty and doubt. He was haunted and tormented by fears especially of a hereafter of woe. In these circumstances the evangelical doctrine of Puritanism came to the rescue and saved him from despair and ruin. Here he found a basis for his life. Here he found satisfaction and peace, not to speak of sanity. Having discovered in his own experience the teaching that met his personal needs, he had no hesitation in adopting it and identifying himself with it. He became a decided and zealous Puritan, consecrating /

consecrating his energies with missionary fervour, to pluck brands from the burning, from which he himself had been mercifully delivered. As to the way of salvation he now held very definite convictions, the presence or the absence of which, he maintained, settled the destiny of the soul.

Bunyan, as a religious teacher, was not a voice crying in the wilderness. He was, by no means, an isolated exponent of his creed; nor was he the solitary herald of a great movement like Wycliffe in the fourteenth century. "The Morning-star of the Reformation" in England. He was a conspicuous unit in a great host who refused to bow the knee to Baal. By the time he joined it, his religious party had become a force to be reckoned with. During his life-time Puritanism experienced many vicissitudes. He saw it persecuted and triumphant and persecuted again; he died on the eve of the Revolution Settlement when religious persecutions in their extreme form were relegated to the past. He saw the cause he loved on the scaffold, and he saw it, under Cromwell, on what may be called almost without metaphor, the throne. He and those like-minded with him had their full share of the frowns of the powers that be, but they also had a glimpse of their smile. On the whole, /

whole, Puritanism was a struggling and a persecuted cause while Bunyan knew it. It was, for the most part, in opposition if not in rebellion. Its taste of the sweets of power during the Commonwealth was brief and hasty, and all that had been won then, seemed to be swept away by the inflowing tide of the Restoration. That was indeed a tremendous reaction. Violently the pendulum of popular feeling swung to the opposite extreme. Puritanism found itself in worse case and confronted with darker prospects than it had ever known. But it refused to acknowledge defeat. It asserted itself with all its native courage and determination. Ere long the pendulum began to move towards something like equilibrium. Before he died, Bunyan saw the passing of the midnight, and the promise of the dawning of a brighter and a calmer day. During the last decade of his life, when the days of his imprisonment were ended, he enjoyed freedom of speech and liberty of prophesying, "no man forbidding him". The protracted struggle was at length decided in his favour. Hence- forward, Puritanism, if not encouraged, was at least not denied the right to live.

For the most part, as we have seen, Puritanism was fighting for its existence in Bunyan's time; and yet that perilous/

perilous time was also its Golden Age. Most of the great Puritan Divines were his contemporaries, The seventeenth century, with all its tumult and strife, is the classical period of Puritanism. To that age belong its notable and typical figures. English Puritanism has contributed three illustrious names to the page of the history of mankind - one man of action and two men of letters - Cromwell, Milton and Bunyan. It is probable that none of the three owes his fame to his exposition of Puritan Doctrine, but at least it was Puritan convictions that made them what they were. These three were children of the 17th century within whose limits English Puritanism may be said to be confined. No doubt the Puritan spirit is immortal, and manifests itself in every age. But the name has long since become historical and is no longer contemporary - which goes to prove, not that Puritanism has disappeared, but that it has now clothed itself in other forms in harmony with a vastly altered environment. The Puritans of the olden time fought and won a battle which is to us a permanent gain. The ground they secured does not require to be re-conquered. Their achievement is definitely associated with the name they bear. But their children and /

and and successors are still with us. The Puritan spirit bearing other names is fighting and subduing old foes with new faces.

The Puritan divines of the seventeenth century, among whom Bunyan finds his place, are, for the most part, little known to fame. Many of them wrote extensively, but few of them wrote attractively. With one or two exceptions they have fallen into popular neglect, even among the devotionally-minded. Dr. Alexander Whyte made a persistent and valiant attempt to commend them to general favour, but it can scarcely be maintained that he has succeeded to any appreciable extent. There are few who now trouble to open their ponderous volumes except the professional scholar whose work lies in that particular field.

Next after Bunyan himself - but a long way after - the best known name is probably that of Richard Baxter<sup>1</sup> (1615-1691). Bunyan and Baxter have been styled "the two greatest<sup>2</sup> spirits in Puritanism" yet these contemporaries never mention each other. Baxter was a learned divine, an eloquent preacher and a voluminous writer. Of his numerous works, "The Saints' Everlasting Rest" had a very considerable vogue even down to recent times, and was to be /

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1. Art. Chambers Encyclopaedia.

2. Hutton p. 217.

be found not only in well-equipped libraries but also on many a humble book-shelf.

Another Puritan contemporary of Bunyan - famous in those days - was Dr. John Owen<sup>1</sup> (1616 - 1683). He held high academic qualifications, and took both his Arts degrees at Oxford. He was a scholar and preacher of unwearied diligence, and his publications were amazingly numerous. He was known as the "Atlas of Independency", which seems to imply that much of the burden of the Puritan cause rested upon his shoulders and that he was fully equal to the load. But his heavy and tedious style has proved an almost insuperable barrier to the survival of his renown.

John Howe<sup>2</sup> (1630 - 1706) is another proof that Puritanism is by no means synonymous with lack of scholarship. He underwent an extensive academic training, and was one of the parish ministers who were ejected in 1662. Unlike Bunyan, he is said to have been a great admirer of Plato. He was one of the most liberal-minded of the Puritans of his day, and his literary output, like those of the others mentioned, was extensive.

Thomas Goodwin, whom Dr. Whyte<sup>3</sup> calls "that prince of /

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1. See Arts. Chambers Encyclopaedia.

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3. Bunyan Characters. III. p. 224.

of expositors" was another leading Puritan divine whose prestige and achievements reflect honour on the cause with which he was associated.

In a study of the sources of Bunyan's theology, we are not directly concerned with those who maintained the Puritan succession and tradition after his death, save in so far as they elucidate and develop what was already implied in the teaching of their predecessors. We may here content ourselves with mentioning the names of such kindred spirits as Philip Doddridge<sup>1</sup> (1702-1751), the author of "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul" which has enjoyed a wide popularity in other lands as well as ours, and which ranks as one of the foremost classics of Puritanism. Doddridge is also famous as a hymn-writer, and perhaps his chief claim to literary and religious immortality lies in his authorship of the second Paraphrase.

Of the same school is Matthew Henry<sup>2</sup> (1662-1714). His "Exposition of the Old and New Testament" is a monumental work whose glory, even in these latter days of advanced scholarship, has by no means departed. As a practical/

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1. See Arts. Chambers Encyclopaedia.

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practical and devotional commentary it is of high and permanent value, and is in little danger of supersession.

In the New England across the Seas, Jonathan Edwards,<sup>1</sup> "theologian and metaphysician", is of the house and lineage of the Puritans, and his star remains one of the brightest in their galaxy.

Over the border in Scotland the Puritan spirit bore another name, but, save in the matter of ecclesiastical polity, there is little difference between the Scottish Covenanter and the English Puritan. Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661), had he lived in England, would undoubtedly have found his place in the Puritan ranks, and the same applies to Thomas Boston (1676 -1732), whose "Fourfold State" might quite easily have issued from a Puritan study.

Such is a brief conspectus of some of the great names in the history of Puritanism. The question naturally suggests itself:- what was the essence of this great movement? What was and is the Puritan spirit? Popular prejudice and misconception are prone to regard Puritanism as "religion without culture", but this is scarcely fair, and even if it contains a modicum of truth, is altogether too /

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1.. See Principal Shairp "Studies in Poetry & Philosophy", p. 393.

too sweeping and indiscriminating. The most fastidious critic would pause before dismissing John Milton as an uncultured man. In his case Puritanism is not found to be incompatible with the ripest scholarship. His religion gave him no distaste for learning, and in this he was not exceptional. Many of the leading Puritan divines, as we have seen, were men of deep and wide erudition; in classical and philosophical culture they were well able to hold their own. It may be that, in general, they shewed little appreciation of letters, as such, or of art. Be it remembered, however, that religion was to them the supreme concern, the one thing needful. They saw, in letters and in art, too much the rival and the foe, and too little the possible handmaid and friend of religion. They failed on the whole to rise to the truth that every wholesome power of man finds its ideal function in bringing the contribution of its special treasure to the service of the Highest and the Best. In the Trinity of Goodness, Truth and Beauty, they lavished their choicest devotion upon the first; they reserved a considerable share of homage for the second, but on the whole it must be confessed that they neglected the third. Yet it is beside the point to regard /

regard them as one-sided, narrow-minded and bigoted. It is very doubtful whether any man or any party of men can 'see life steadily and see it whole'. Truth is many faceted, and no one of us can do anything like justice to all its aspects. The Puritans, at least fastened upon an essential aspect of the truth - which it may be, they exaggerated. Authority and freedom are two antinomies. Each has its place and function in the Church and in human society. But to hold the balance absolutely fair as between the two is indeed a hard if not an impossible task.

Champions of spiritual freedom, as the Puritans were called to be, can scarcely be expected to be scrupulously just in estimating the claims of authority. Moreover, there are certain periods when, freedom being menaced, its battle must be fought; and there are other periods when, freedom having been abused, its vagaries must be restrained by lawful authority. The Puritans stood for something vital which, in their time, was in danger of being lost. They rendered an indispensable service to their own age in the first place, and thereafter to all succeeding ages, by laying the emphasis where they did - upon that side of the truth which had come home to themselves, and which in their /

their day needed to be emphasized; and this is indeed the only service any of us can hope to render to the cause of truth and religion.

Puritanism may be described, somewhat unsympathetically, as ultra-Protestantism. Anything supposed to lead towards Rome awakens the Puritan's alarm and hostility, and he strongly suspects that Prelacy is only a half-way house on the road to Papacy. Hence his distrust of the avowed via media of the Anglican Church. Puritanism<sup>1</sup> first appeared in the Church of England as a protest against alleged Romanizing tendencies therein. It stood for the freedom of the individual Christian conscience as against what is held to be the unwarranted imposition of ecclesiastical authority. It had a marked repugnance to liturgies and fixed forms of public prayer - which is notably exemplified in the case of Bunyan. Simplicity, spirituality and freedom of worship - based upon the Scriptures and dissociated from any of the adornments of art - were its characteristic ideals. In marked contrast to the geniality and gaiety and not infrequent licentiousness of the Cavalier, the Roundhead or Puritan in his daily walk and conversation was strict and grave, and has often /

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1. Chambers Encyclopaedia Art. Puritans.

often been caricatured<sup>1</sup> as of sour visage and forbidding ~~me~~in. His enemies have not hesitated to brand him as a canting hypocrite, but the libel may be dismissed as false save in a few isolated cases. The typical Puritan was deeply in earnest and of eminently serious mind. His ideals of personal holiness were lofty and exacting, and, in most cases, he made a strenuous and sustained attempt to live up to them. There can be no doubt that a good Puritan is a most excellent type of Christian. There are, of course, certain manifest deficiencies due probably in the main to the sternness of his Calvinistic creed with its imperfect sense of the love of God. Nevertheless it is distinctly true that without Puritanism and its special witness, the religious life of England would be immeasurably poorer and could not be "made perfect".

It should be noted that Puritanism, in spite of its apparent exclusiveness, was characterised by a certain comprehensiveness. It was not, the label of any one religious sect. It did not identify itself, like Episcopacy or Presbyterianism, with any one system of ecclesiastical polity or Church government. Independents, Baptists and representatives of other denominations as well, assembled together /

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1. See Sir Walter Scott; "Peveril of the Peak".

together under its banner. Puritanism is not so much a question of outward form as of inward spirit and attitude. It is that elusive yet most substantial entity to which we sometimes attach the name 'ethos'. There are men in different Christian Churches to whom the Puritan spirit and message are congenial; and there are others - good Christians also - who have not so learned Christ.

Luther and Calvin were both uncompromising Protestants, but the Puritans were quite definitely the children and the pupils of Calvin. They did not quite understand Luther's genial humanity and joie de vivre; in some of his moods he did not appear to take life seriously enough for them. They preferred the ascetic and rigorous spirit of Calvin which seemed to them nearer to the ideal type of Christian thinking and Christian living. They were too keenly aware of the dangers of this world's allurements to be able to enjoy even its innocent pleasures with any relish. They felt that, if their souls were to be saved, they had to be ever on their guard against the sinful tendencies of the flesh. It must be admitted that the negative element bulks largely in their creed and general outlook. The necessity for self-denial they understood and appreciated; the ideal of self-realisation scarcely ever /

ever swam into their ken. It must, however, be stated in their defence that in this they grasped an essential element in the truth, for it is vain to talk of self-realisation without self-denial. The true Puritan has a decided element of something like asceticism in his composition. The genuine pilgrim flees from the City of Destruction, and "sets very light" by the glittering attractions of Vanity Fair. This is a species of asceticism, though not of the ancient monkish variety, and who shall say, that, in view of the issues at stake and the dangers involved, it is not justified? In any case it is an authentic expression of the Puritan spirit, suggested by the name itself.

Puritanism has its own line of cleavage which, to a certain extent, cuts athwart denominational divisions. It was antagonistic to what it conceived to be the genius of the Church of Rome, as an ally of which it reckoned at least the dominant party in the Anglican Church. These were its avowed opponents on the right. On the left, there were certain types of religious thought, which the average Puritan regarded with perhaps equal repugnance. He had no liking for mysticism and Quakerism, as he understood them. John Bunyan had no great confidence in the Quakers' /

Quakers' touchstone of the "inner light". He felt that their theory failed to do anything like justice to the historicity of the gospels and of Christ. It was much too vague and subjective to appeal to him. He rejects the doctrine of an infallible church as the seat of authority in religion, but he clings to the Book; and his quarrel with the Quakers is that their way of thinking tends to undermine the supremacy of the Word of God. Thus there is a distinction between the Puritan and the mystic, though with a better understanding of each other, they tend to approximate. Puritanism also is scrupulously careful to safeguard itself against the charge of antinomianism. It separated itself decisively from certain emotional and sensational sects whose teaching was believed to be subversive of sound morality. The true Puritan was most anxious to demonstrate in his life as well as by his words, that his evangelical creed, so far from being conducive to looseness of conduct, was in reality productive of the finest flowers and fruits of personal integrity and holiness. He believed that his creed, when honestly held, was certain to issue in a good life, and that indeed a truly good life could not grow in any other soil.

Puritanism, /



Puritanism, as we have seen, is not the name of any one denominational Church. It is a species of outlook, temper, spirit, which may be traced in the individual members of many churches. As such, it has no "subordinate standards". It has no cast-iron system of belief, like the Roman Catholic Church. It has neither its Thirty-nine Articles nor its Confession of Faith of which subscription, in terms more or less binding is required. The Bible is its sole standard - the Bible as interpreted in terms of the scholarship of the day. If we would distil the essence of Puritan doctrine we must resort to the works of the leading Puritan Divines. Their greatest common measure would probably be our nearest approximation to the desired result.

Calvin, as has already been indicated, was the great master of the Puritans, and Bunyan was a Calvinist like the rest of his school. Orthodox Scottish Presbyterianism and English Puritanism agree in taking their theology in the main from Geneva, though Puritanism usually goes elsewhere for its Church government. It is curious that Puritanism, notwithstanding its passion for freedom, identified itself unmistakably with the Calvinists in the Arminian controversy. To the Puritan, Arminian liberalism was /

was latitudinarian in the definitely sinister sense; it played fast and loose with the Bible, and particularly with Paulinism - which the Puritan expositors held to be clearly predestinarian. The Puritans rejected Arminianism as lax and even licentious in its influence on thought and life, and as incompatible with, and contradictory to, the Word of God. Nor can it be questioned that an impartial exposition finds much justification in Scripture and particularly in the Epistles of St. Paul for the Calvinistic interpretation.

It is said<sup>1</sup> that Bunyan "accepted implicitly the Puritan system of thought as he found it"; and a study of his writings seems to bear this out, at any rate in the main. He is in no sense an original thinker in Christian Dogmatics. He proclaims no new Gospel; he does not even emphasize any aspect of the old Gospel which he considers as neglected or in danger of neglect. But he does not swallow his Puritanism in an indiscriminate mass. He assimilates and digests it, and thinks it over for himself. He tests it by the supreme standard of Scripture; he sifts it by his own powers of logic and reason, which his doctrinal writings show to have been of no mean order; he examines /

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1. Brown.

examines it in the light of his own spiritual experience. He followed in the wake of the great Puritans and thought their thoughts after them, but every step on the road he was anxious to take for himself. He strained every endeavour to make his accepted creed in the deepest sense his own. This is manifest in his perplexities, particularly in early days, over the doctrines of election and reprobation. He found it no easy matter to convince himself that he was one of the elect. Later, when he became a preacher, it was his duty, as he saw it, to do justice both to election and free grace. The validity of each member of this antinomy he strongly asserts. He will scarcely tone down, much less surrender either the one or the other. He is convinced that both are true but he realises that it is difficult indeed to reconcile them. His practical solution of the problem seems to be that the benefit of the doubt should be given to the reassuring and comforting promises of God's Word, and that it becomes us - as he is fond of saying - to "act faith" upon these. It was not given to Bunyan to solve the age-long mystery of determinism and free-will - which is still with us. But at least he wrestled with it, and arrived /

arrived at a working hypothesis - which is perhaps all that can be expected of finite minds.

Some additional remarks may be deemed requisite on the topic of Bunyan's precise Church-connection. He is often classed as a Baptist, but a scrutiny of the evidence available would seem to point to the conclusion that it is more correct to regard him as a Congregationalist or Independent. It is perhaps little to the point that he himself was baptized as an infant in the Church of England. Much more significant are the recorded baptisms<sup>1</sup> of three of his children - two in Elstow Parish Church, and the third in St. Cuthberts', Bedford. Moreover, the second of the three - that of his daughter, Elizabeth - took place in 1654, the year after her father had attached himself to Gifford's Church, while the third, - that of his son Joseph - took place as late as the year 1672. The inference surely is that Bunyan, even after he left the Church of England, was never of the "straitest sect" of the Baptists, if a Baptist at all. This is supported by what is known of the constitution of Gifford's Church at Bedford with which Bunyan identified himself in 1653 and of which congregation he was called to be pastor<sup>2</sup> in 1671.

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1. Brown I. 227.

2. Brown I. 219.

The Church was founded on William Dell's<sup>1</sup> principles:-  
 "Faith in Christ and Holiness of life, without respect to this or that circumstance or opinion in outward and circumstantiall things". Even George Offor, who would fain claim Bunyan as a Baptist, admits that this Church was "probably"<sup>2</sup> the first, in modern times, which allowed to every individual freedom of judgment as to water baptism". In his "Differences in Judgment about Water Baptism, no Bar to Communion" (1672) Bunyan strongly opposes the attitude of such as would insist upon adult baptism as an indispensable preliminary to full communion with the Church. Controversies as to the mode and time of baptism he regards as unedifying, and as a deplorable and unnecessary cause of schism. He desired his Church to be comprehensive enough to contain Paedobaptists, Baptists, and even believers who were satisfied to dispense with Baptism altogether. This attitude can scarcely be asserted to be typically Baptist. In further support of our contention that Bunyan was less of a Baptist than of a Congregationalist, it may be mentioned that in the record<sup>3</sup> of Gifford's Church, that minister is stated to have "continued preaching  
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1. Brown.Lp. 83.
  2. Works I. XXVII.
  3. Brown. I. 81.

awhile and receiving some light in the Congregational way". Further in the Indulgence<sup>1</sup> granted by Charles II in 1672, the flock to which Bunyan ministered is described as "of the Perswasion commonly called Congregationall".

Bunyan did not like denominational labels, which, he held, tended to produce and to accentuate schism. Non-conformist and dissenter though he was, he shrank from any unwarranted rending of the seamless robe of Christ. In days of division he was a herald of true Church Union. The following passage from "Peaceable Principles and True" (1674), in which treatise he continues the baptismal controversy, is significant and emphatic<sup>2</sup>:- "You ask me next, 'How long is it since I was a Baptist?' and then add, 'It is an ill bird that bewrays his own nest'. Answer. I must tell you, avoiding your slovenly language, I know none to whom that title is so proper as to the disciples of John. And since you would know by what name I would be distinguished from others; I tell you, I would be, and hope I am a CHRISTIAN; and choose, if God should count me worthy, to be called a Christian, a Believer, or other such name which is approved by the Holy Ghost (Acts XI. 26) And /

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1. Ibid. 220

1. Offor II. 648-9.

And as for those factious titles of Anabaptists, Independents, Presbyterians, or the like, I conclude, that they come neither from Jerusalem, nor Antioch, but rather from hell and Babylon; for they naturally tend to divisions, you may know them by their fruits".

John Bunyan, we conclude, prefers not to be classified - enough for him to be worthy of the name, Christian - but if classification be insisted on, his place is that of a Puritan of the Congregational type or, if the name Baptist be retained, he must be viewed as "a very<sup>1</sup> free Baptist".

(6) The Personal Equation and the Experiences of his Life.

No enumeration nor estimate of the sources of Bunyan's theology can afford to omit the personal factor. To account for him and for his work with any degree of success, it is not sufficient to study his environment. He was something more than the play-thing of the external forces that impinged upon him. He carried with him into the world the seeds and the potencies of a strongly-marked individuality, whose distinctive features never became blurred, but, as time went on, developed and accentuated themselves. /

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1. Hutton. p. 275.

themselves. John Bunyan is never lost in the crowd; his personality has asserted itself, and has won a place of its own. It is not sufficient, though quite correct so far as it goes, to describe the author of "The Pilgrim's Progress" as an English Puritan of the Seventeenth Century. There are many writers of whom little more need be said than that they are the children of their time and members, more or less prominent, of a definite group. But the real

Bunyan refuses to be dismissed with a classification of this sort, which, in his case, leaves behind it a hulky residuum, ignored and unnamed; indeed, the so-called residuum is of much more weight and significance here than the part which lies open to scientific and historical research.

No genius is to be explained in terms of his environment, and the title of genius, reserved for the loftiest flights of the human spirit, is not misapplied when awarded to Bunyan. The seventeenth Century is his starting point but not his resting place, for he soars far above it, and his fame has long survived it. From the historical point of view he belongs to the definite period within which he lived and died. The action and reaction of the influences of his time upon him cannot be too carefully investigated /



investigated, but there is a wide field above and beyond, whose existence at least must be recognised. There is an incalculable element in Bunyan's composition whose presence and working must be acknowledged - something that his surroundings had it not in them to bestow. His great book has not perished with the seventeenth century. There is something in it which appeals to human beings of every century. Its writer must have been no mere child of his own age, else the appeal of his book would not have been universal. Bunyan brought with him into the world native gifts conveyed to him through other channels than his immediate environment of space and time.

Personality and individuality are, in the last resort, unanalysable and unique. They present afresh the baffling problem of life, complicated by the additional mysteries of mind and spirit. In the case of a genius, these imponderable quantities are exhibited at their highest powers and reaches in human development. It is irrational to attempt to account fully for a genius. Comparisons will not help us much when we come to deal with the incomparable. We cannot weigh the timeless and the universal in the paltry and limited measures of time and space. We must recognise in /

in Bunyan the presence of an irreducible surd which we cannot further simplify. His genius is to be traced to no other source than the Divine afflatus. We cannot do other, it seems, than accept Browning's<sup>1</sup> verdict:-

"'Tis my belief God speaks; no tinker hath such powers".

Having recognised admiringly and reverently the presence of Divine gifts, we may seek to look into the qualities of Bunyan's mind and spirit, that we may name, if we cannot account for, certain of his pre-eminent endowments. He was strong in two mental departments wherein most of his fellow-Puritans were notably deficient; imaginative power and the human touch were his in rich measure. By his skilful exercise of these he captures our attention and captivates our interest. He is no dry-as-dust Puritan divine. He achieves with ease what his brethren, with all their learning, could never compass. He holds the secret of winning for himself the popular ear and drawing to his page the popular eye. The magic key, which every speaker and every writer longs to possess, the key which will unlock the wards of the human heart, and give admission to that wondrous territory, that key lay in Bunyan's bosom, and he uses it with consummate skill in "The Pilgrim's Progress /

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1. Quoted in Bunyan Characters III. p. 225.

Progress". For once, a Puritan has achieved this remarkable and enviable feat - he has made himself not merely readable but enthrallingly interesting.

Bunyan's powers were inborn rather than acquired. He owed most to the natural bent and aptitudes of his mind and spirit. He was furnished from the outset with a remarkable equipment of varied talents, which in their harmonious combination make up his unique charm. His mind is not only imaginative but also logical. He can conjure up winsome pictures, but he can also argue effectively and convincingly. He is a redoubtable controversialist as well as a dreamer of dreams. He has a grasp of 'nice' and fine points in theology. He loves to weave a captivating tale, and shows no little skill in constructing a plot. He has a taste for romance, and may well be regarded as the precursor of the modern novel. But he is also quick to detect a fallacy in his opponent's reasoning. He does not shun the arena of debate, but when the trumpet sounds, it stirs in him the joy of battle, and he rushes to the fray against formidable antagonists, amply assured that his blade is trusty, and that he can wield it victoriously. And we never find him owning that his confidence was misplaced /

misplaced.

As a writer he never strains after effect. He is eminently natural and artless. Even in his self-consciousness he is content to be his simple self. "The Pilgrim's Progress" invests a theme essentially subjective with a healthy objectivity. While it shows us ourselves, it somehow takes us out of ourselves. Unlike the average Puritan, Bunyan, in spite of all his seriousness, had a strong dash of the "saving grace" of humour. He is a master musician on the organ of human emotion. His touch can thrill and inspire. He can evoke our smiles or our tears, as he pleases. He can wake the chords of humour or of pathos. He can be witty, pungent, satirical. But he is not bitter, malevolent nor cynical like Dean Swift. He has a tender, sympathetic heart, and he can easily melt his reader into tears. He does not deal in abstractions and generalisations, but is eminently concrete, vivid, picturesque. He keeps close to human life, of which his best work is a transcript. He is characteristically homely, racy, unpretentious. At the same time he does not descend to aimless garrulity. He has the natural forcefulness and pithiness /

pithiness of the language of the unsophisticated and unlettered peasant. His writings abound in proverbs and sententious sayings, of which he betrays a marked fondness. Nor is he above a certain propensity for riddles, and plays upon words.

Dr. Whyte<sup>1</sup> has pointed out that "John Bunyan is always at his very best in allegory". In other departments of literary and theological work he has successful rivals and competitors, but no one has come near him in his own special field. Here he is peerless and unsurpassed. To his credit stand the two greatest allegories in literature. "The Holy War" is unexcelled in this department save by "The Pilgrim's Progress", which far outshines it. John Bunyan was happy in finding his métier. His was not the tragedy of those who have mistaken their vocation. He discovered his unique gift and brought it to light.

Allegory is a rare and difficult art. In the select class of allegorists might be placed Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) and he too was of the lineage of the Puritans. Dramatists and novelists are numerous, but allegorists are few. It is not easy to handle this somewhat artificial mode /

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1. Bunyan Characters III. p. 224.

mode of expression in a natural and effective manner. Bunyan alone has solved the problem with success. It is easy to produce a metaphor, which will run naturally for a sentence or two; but to carry a metaphor, from beginning to end, of a lengthy book, without ever dropping it, is a Herculean task. A sustained allegory of any length is difficult indeed to construct. The boundary between the allegory itself and the subject allegorized is in constant danger of breaking down. Moreover, there is the ever-present risk of mixing metaphors. The "spiritual world", in short, - Henry Drummond's illuminating book notwithstanding - can not be exhaustively, or even in many cases adequately, set forth in terms of "natural law". There are many rocks on which allegory is liable to make shipwreck, and few are bold enough to face the voyage. Having said this, however, we must admit that there are many points of resemblance and contact between the natural and the spiritual worlds, and these may be seized upon by penetrating and imaginative minds. "The Pilgrim's Progress", as an allegory, is not without its inconsistencies, but these are after all but "spots on the sun". Bunyan carries through his undertaking with brilliant and indeed unique success.

Bunyan's /

Bunyan's mind may be described as distinctively allegorical. His special gift lies, as one<sup>1</sup> has pointed out, in his marvellous aptitude for setting forth the spiritual in the garb of the temporal. He revels in types, symbols, analogies, similitudes, as is manifest in all his works. He is fond of showing that the Christian dispensation was prefigured by the Jewish, and he traces the fulfilment of anticipation down into minute and even trivial details. Sometimes his analogies are apt and happy; sometimes they are fanciful and far-fetched. In any case nothing pleased him more than to search them out and set them forth. Such was the natural bent of his mind. Comparisons and illustrations appealed to him and poured in upon him. Resemblances between things natural and things spiritual were ever flashing upon his mind. One eventful day he saw that something might be made of the old metaphor which likens the Christian life to a journey. As he meditated upon that theme, analogies and comparisons crowded upon him; he took up his pen, and the result is that he reigns as King of allegorists.

It must be added, in conclusion, that Bunyan's natural equipment of talent was notably reinforced by the /

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1. Scotsman Leader, 26th Nov. 1928.

the experiences of his life. In that stern but wholesome school he learned many a lesson. His spiritual history, as portrayed in "Grace Abounding" is of great importance as a "source" of his theology. It shows how he arrived at the views he came to hold. His peace of mind and spirit was not lightly won; it was only attained after a lengthy and tempestuous period of storm and stress. For long he 'tarried at Sinai', a prey to the terrors of conscience and of the law. For long he fluctuated between doubt and faith, between fear and hope. Time and again he seemed to find relief, only to be plunged again into despondency and terror. Finally he found rest in the evangelical Gospel of Puritanism, though he realised that this life must be a struggle to the end.

Bunyan is not one of those whose theology may be considered apart from their life. His teaching is not to be torn from the context of his own spiritual history. He is of the order of the great "experimental" divines, who are deeply read in the lore of the book of their own hearts. Personal experience is a decisive element in his view of religion. This factor he stresses strongly, and he does not hesitate to tell his own spiritual story with its sins, its /



its conflicts, its varying fortunes of defeat and victory, and its deliverance. "Come", he says "and I will show you what God hath done for my soul". The theologian does not always consider that self-revelation is relevant or requisite; he frequently conceals his personality in the mazes of his subject, and is slow to divulge his personal convictions, being chary of displaying his heart on his sleeve. But Bunyan takes us frankly into his confidence. He does not shrink from the frequent use of the first person singular. He draws aside the veil, and shows us all that is in his heart. He offers us ample opportunity to get to know him. No false modesty faces him to take refuge in the shelter of anonymity. He speaks directly out of his own experience, believing that he can thus best accomplish his great ends, of the glory of God and the salvation of souls. In no wise can the charge be levelled against him of hiding under a bushel the light that was in him. Theology to him was not a mere science which may be studied dispassionately and impersonally by the cold day light of reason. He cannot take a detached view of religion. To him it is a matter of intimate personal concern affecting his own eternal well-being. On a topic involving questions of life and death he felt that /

that it is vain and even criminal to talk of impartiality. On his view religion and life are almost identical. Theory and practice are here indissolubly wedded. His "Grace Abounding" shows how close was his personal identification with the creed he taught and professed. He made searching trial of it for himself and found in it the basis of his own life and the foundation of his hopes for his destiny hereafter, ere he ventured to commend it to others. It was the doctrine which had saved himself that he preached to the world, and he was ever ready to bring forward his personal witness on its behalf. "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4: 42.). "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you. (John 1: 3).

SECTION B. - CONTENT.

(1) General Impressions.

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(1) General Impressions.

"The best measure", says Amiel<sup>1</sup>, "of the profundity of any religious doctrine is given by its conception of sin and the cure of sin." Weighed in these balances, John Bunyan will not be found wanting. His theology attaches first-rate importance to sin and the sense of sin. Before we enter upon a detailed examination of his doctrine of sin it is well to stress the fact that sin bulks enormously in his whole view of life. Such is the general impression borne out by all his writings. Whatever he is guilty of, at least he does not minimise sin. He is not of those who would heal slightly and superficially the hurt of humanity. No writer, even among the Puritans themselves, testifies more insistently and more powerfully to the reality and gravity of sin. To these themes indeed he has often been accused of rendering more than full justice. Whether or not that criticism be true, at least it must be granted that he lays tremendous emphasis upon sin, which is to him no mere fantasy but a solid and appalling fact. At the foundation of the whole structure of his /

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1. Amiel's Journal - translated by Mrs Humphry Ward  
London, 1922. p. 70.

his theology lies the basic fact of sin. The religious life in the soul takes its rise in the first stirrings of the sense of personal sin. There would be no "pilgrimage" but for the "burden". Sin is the problem which salvation solves. Salvation is meaningless without sin. To weaken and disparage the sense of sin is to weaken and disparage the necessity for a Saviour. In magnifying sin the Saviour from sin is magnified; in denying sin the Saviour from sin is denied. Sin cannot be eliminated from its dominating place in Bunyan's theology.

Quotations, numerous and telling, to prove these assertions may be made from Bunyan's writings of all periods of his life. They are amply sufficient to place his view beyond dispute. The following extracts bear witness to his unexcelled appreciation of the heinousness and enormity of sin:- "Nothing can<sup>1</sup> for badness be compared to sin; it is the vile thing, it cannot have a worse name than its own; it is worse than the vilest man, that the vilest of beasts; yea sin is worse than the devil himself, for it is sin and sin only that hath made the devils, devils. . . . "Sin, in the general of it, is the sting of hell, for there would be no such thing as torment even /

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1. Offor. Works I. p. 140.

even there, were it not that sin is there with sinners" (II. 149)<sup>1</sup>. . . . "Sin is like carrion; it is of a stinking nature; yea it has the worst of smells, however some men like it. But none are offended with the scent thereof but God and the broken-hearted sinner . . . But alas! who smells the stink of sin? None of the carnal world; they, like carrion crows, seek it, love it and eat it as a child eats bread" (I. 696 - 7). "But, I say, what a thing is sin, what a devil and master of devils is it, that it should, where it takes hold, so hang that nothing can unclench its hold but the mercy of God and the heart-blood of His dear Son. O the fretting, eating, infecting, defiling and poisonous nature of sin that it should so eat into our flesh and spirit, body and soul and so stain us with its vile and stinking nature . . . wherefore sin is a fearful thing; a thing to be lamented, a thing to be abhorred, a thing to be fled from with more astonishment and trembling than one would fly from any devil, because it is the worst of things; and that without which nothing can be bad." (I. 682). . . . "Sin is the opposite to God. There is nothing that seeketh absolutely and in its own nature to annihilate God, but sin /

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1. The references are to Offor.

sin, and sin doth so. Sin is worse than the devil; he, therefore, that is more afraid of the devil than of sin, knows not the badness of sin as he ought; nor but little of the love of Jesus Christ" (II. 25) . . . "Sin is a mighty tyrant; it is also installed in our flesh and has moreover that in it which suiteth with whatever is sensual in us. The flesh relisheth it well, though the spirit of the Christian is against it. Sin is an active beast and will not admit that the soul should attempt to put forth itself in any good thing without opposition and contradiction" (II. 525) . . . "Sin is still in us [even after justification] and mixes itself with whatever we do, whether that we do be religious or civil; for not only our prayers and our sermons, our hearings and preachings and so; but our houses, our shops, our trades and our beds are all polluted with sin" (I. 197). Though none can paint more lurid and terrifying pictures of the penalties of sin than Bunyan, yet we find in him also the lofty spiritual message that sin is to be shunned and hated in and for itself - apart from consideration of its consequences, as witness the following:- "How is iniquity in thine eye when severed from the guilt and punishment that attends it? . . . For if in its own nature it be desirable to thy mind /

mind, and only therefore shunned for fear of the punishment that attends the commission of it, without doubt thou art none of them that depart from it." (II. 516) . . .

"Why wouldest thou go to heaven? Is it because that wouldest be saved from hell, or because thou wouldest be freed from sin?" (II. 517). Bunyan here clearly states the two great motives for the avoidance of sin, and he also recognises which is the higher and the more spiritual. The death of Christ, Bunyan points out, brings forth into yet bolder prominence the enormity of sin. It "shows us what a horrible thing the sin of man is" (I. 609) . .

"Without shedding of blood is no remission. No remission, no pardon, or passing by of the least transgression without it. Tears! Christ's tears will not do it. Prayers! Christ's prayers will not do it. An holy life! The holy life that Christ lived will not do it, as severed from His death and blood." (I. 610).

Having proved from his own writings Bunyan's unequivocal recognition of the gravity of sin we now pass to the corollary and consequence of this acknowledgment. With unwearied frequency and persistence we find him insisting upon the necessity of the sense of sin. "That man that doth not know he is a sinner, doth not know savingly that there /



there is a Saviour" (I. 494) . . . . "I beseech thee consider that thou art under the wrath of Almighty God, and hast been so ever since thou camest into the world, Eph. II. 1,2, being then in thy first parents, thou didst transgress against thy Maker . . . . Besides the many SINS thou hast committed ever since thou wast born . . consider, I say, thy condition; yea, get a very great sense of thy sins that thou hast committed" (II. 136). "Labour to get and keep a deep sense of sin in its evil nature, and in its soul-destroying effects upon thy heart; be persuaded that it is the only enemy of God, and that none hate, or are hated of God, but through that" (I. 714). . . . "That which makes a man a hearty, an unfeigned, a sincere seeker after the good of his own soul, is sense of sin, and a godly fear of being overtaken with the danger which it brings a man into" (I. 718) . . "He that hath not seen his lost condition hath not seen a safe condition; he that did never see himself in the devil's snare did never see himself in Christ's bosom" (I. 494). In "A Confession of my Faith" (1672), he points out that effectual calling involves "an effectual awakening about the evil of sin; and especially of unbelief" (II. 599).  
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In "Instruction for the Ignorant" (1675), a species of catechism with question and answer we find the following:-

"In thy confessions thou must greaten and aggravate thy sin by all just circumstances" (II. 682). . . "Labour by all means for a sense of the evil that is in sin" (ibid).

The essential preliminary qualification for salvation is sense of sin. Hence if the reality of sin is impugned, Bunyan's entire theological system falls to the ground.

"Q. But how must I be qualified before I shall dare to believe in Christ? A. Come sensible of thy sins, and of the wrath of God due unto them, for thus thou art bid to come. Matt. XI. 28" - (II. 684). "To save supposeth the person to be saved to be at present in a sad condition; saving, to him that is not lost, signifies nothing, neither is it anything in itself. 'To save, to redeem, to deliver,' are in the general terms equivalent, and they do all of them suppose us to be in a state of thralldom and misery" (I. 337). Grace, according to Bunyan, presupposes sin. "The saint has strong guilt of sin upon his conscience, especially at first, and this makes him better judge what grace, in the nature of grace, is, than others can that are not sensible of what guilt is . . . Sin is that without a sense of which a man is not apprehensive what grace is /

is. Sin and grace, favour and wrath, death and life, hell and heaven, are opposites, and are set forth, or out, in their evil or good, shame or glory, one by another. What makes grace so good to us as sin in its guilt and filth? What makes sin so horrible and damnable a thing in our eyes, as when we see there is nothing can save us from it but the infinite grace of God?" (I. 662). In this same passage he proceeds to argue that it is sense of sin which creates the appetite for salvation even as "hunger directs to bread" and "thirst directs to water." The following counsel is characteristic of Bunyan and many times repeated in varying forms:- "Know thyself what a vile, horrible, abominable sinner thou art: For thou canst not know the love of Christ, before thou knowest the badness of thy nature" (II. 28). It is only the "brutish" man who has no sense of sin (I. 696). Badman died in unrepentant security. He had no "sight and sense" of his sins (III. 656 - 9); hence we conclude that "sight and sense" of our sins are essential. It is noteworthy that this exact phrase "sight and sense" occurs in the definition of Repentance unto Life in 'the Larger Catechism'<sup>1</sup>. In other words Bunyan stresses the indispensableness of sound /

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1. The Confession of Faith &c. Edinburgh 1845.

sound repentance. "Sinner, do not deceive thyself; if thou art a stranger to sound repentance which standeth in sorrow and shame before God for sin, as also in turning from it, thou hast no fear of God" (I. 460). It is a sine qua non that "we must see ourselves sinners (I. 705). "The heart must be broken before the man can come to good" (I. 706), and "a broken heart comes by the discovery and charge of sin by the power of God upon the conscience" (I. 705). "How are they to believe concerning themselves, then when they put forth the first act of faith . . .? Are they to think that they are righteous or sinners? Sinners, sinners doubtless they are to reckon themselves" (II. 256) in proof whereof he quotes Romans V. 6, 8, 10. "Conviction (for sin) is the first step to faith and repentance, yea, and to life eternal" (I. 350) . . . "Be thankful, therefore, for convictions; conversion begins at conviction, though all conviction does not end in conversion. It is a great mercy to be convinced that we are sinners, and that we need a Saviour; count it therefore a mercy, and that thy convictions may end in conversion, do thou take heed of stifling them . . . Be willing to see the worst of thy condition. It is better to see it here than in hell; for thou must "see thy misery here or /

or there" (I. 387). The true sense of sin opens the gate for the enjoyment of many benefits. For instance, it prompts and teaches prayer. "The way that men learn to pray it is by conviction for sin" (I. 635). Further, the sense of sin makes Christ precious to the believer - "Though sin made death bitter to Christ, yet sin makes Christ sweet to His. And though none should sin that grace might abound, yet where sin has abounded, grace doth much more abound, not only as an act of God but also in the eye of faith" (I. 617). In the following sentence Bunyan's teaching on the sense of sin finds ecstatic and enthusiastic utterance:- "The sweetest frame, the most heart-endearing frame that possibly a Christian can get into while in this world it is to have a warm sight of sin and of a Saviour upon the heart at one time" (II. 99).

We have seen that Bunyan urges strongly and constantly that the sense of sin be fostered and cultivated. He was deeply impressed with its necessity, and his language seems often to lay him open to the charge of exaggeration. He was aware of this, and he has his defence ready. He would never admit that exaggeration in this matter is possible, the heinousness of sin being excelled only in magnitude and power by the grace of God. He has no fear that /

that the sinner should overstate his sin, the risk being all the other way. "Reckon thyself, therefore, I say, the biggest sinner in the world, and be persuaded that there is none worse than thyself; then let the guilt of it seize on thy heart, then also go in that case and condition to Jesus Christ, and plunge thyself into His merits and the virtue of His blood" (I. 494). In an interesting passage Bunyan shows how even a saint may truthfully describe himself as the greatest of sinners, and how this is his proper attitude in the presence of God:-

"A sinner may be comparatively a little sinner, and sensibly a great one. There are, then, two sorts of greatness in sin - greatness by reason of number; greatness by reason of thoroughness of conviction of the horrible nature of sin. In this last sense, he that has but one sin, if such an one could be found, may, in his own eyes, find himself the biggest sinner in the world . . he, in our present sense, that is in his own eyes the biggest sinner, is he that soonest findeth mercy. . . . Sin, as I said, in the nature of it, is horrible, though it be but one single sin as to act; yea, though it be but a sinful thought; and so worthily calls for the damnation of the soul /

soul. The comparison, then, of little sinners and great sinners, is to go for good sense among men. But to plead the fewness of thy sins, or the comparative harmlessness of their quantity before God, argueth no sound knowledge of the nature of thy sin, and so no true sense of the nature or need of mercy." This view of sin leads up logically to Bunyan's practical conclusion:- "When thou goest to God for mercy, know no man's sins but thine own. Also labour not to lessen thy own, but magnify and greaten them by all just circumstances, and be as if there was never a sinner in the world but thyself. Also cry out, as if thou wast but the only undone man; and that is the way to obtain God's mercy" (I. 94-5). There are indications that Bunyan's views on the gravity of sin were assailed in his own day on the same lines of attack as in modern times. His attitude has always been liable to the charges of exaggeration and morbid introspection. But though he mellowed with the passing years, and came to dwell less upon the sin of man than upon the love of God, he always retained a deep impression of the "exceeding sinfulness" of sin. One of his latest works - "Israel's Hope Encouraged" - published in 1692 after his decease contains the following:- "And although some of the wanton professors /

professors of our age may blame thee for poring so much upon thy sins, and the pollution of thy nature, yet know that there is an advantage in it" (I. 617).

The stress which Bunyan lays upon sin and the need of the sense of sin, is no new feature in Christian doctrine. His originality lies, if anywhere, not in the assertion of the fact but in the weight of his emphasis. He brings out into fierce and glaring prominence colours which were already present in the picture. His teaching here is in harmony not only with distinctively Puritan but also with general Christian tradition. The only difference is that his individuality and experience lead him to dwell upon and to accentuate the notes of tragedy.

It scarcely requires to be proved that it has always been in accordance with the genius of Christianity to recognise the reality and the gravity of sin. The following is the pronouncement of Dr. T.R. Glover<sup>1</sup>:- "It was the Jew who brought to the common Christian stock the conception of sin, and the significance of this is immense in the history of the religion. It differentiated Christianity from all the religions and philosophical systems of the ancient world." Here is the dividing line between /

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1. The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire by T.R. Glover, London 1927 p. 144.



between Christian and pagan modes of thought and attitudes to life. It is characteristically Christian to acknowledge sin; it is characteristically pagan to ignore or at least to minimise it. No father of the ancient Church speaks with a voice more authoritative to Protestant and Roman Catholic alike than St. Augustine (354 - 430). He stands for no compromise with any such system of Pelagian thought, however plausible, as would tamper with, or tone down, the enormity and disastrousness of sin. The cleavage of the Catholic Church at the Reformation was the issue, in large measure, of a re-thinking of the problem of sin and a more thorough handling of the same. Luther's quarrel with the mediaeval church arose from his conviction that her treatment of sin was superficial, frivolous and fraudulent. He tested her doctrine of justification by works, and found that it was not only unscriptural or at least un-Pauline, but that, when taken seriously it led, as he points out again and again, to "desperation". He too, though more "healthy-minded" than Bunyan was faced with the terrible enigma of sin personal and general, and he had to find the solution or perish. He attained peace of conscience and the answer to his questionings in the Pauline /

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1. Luther on the Galatians Fol. 226 et passim.

Pauline and Christian doctrine of justification by faith, which presupposes man's natural inability and sinfulness and the unreserved acknowledgment thereof. "Now,<sup>1</sup> the true way to Christianity is this, that a man above all things doe acknowledge him selfe to be a sinner by the lawe and that it is impossible for him to doe any good worke. For the law sayth: Thou art an evill tree, and therefore all that thou thinkest, speakest or doest is against God." Bunyan read these words and whole-heartedly subscribed to their teaching.

The Reformed branch of the Protestant Church, whatever its divergence from the Lutheran, certainly did not take a less serious view of sin. Indeed the difference is probably all the other way. Calvin in "The Institutes of the Christian Religion" is clear and unequivocal, and such statements as the following are typical:- "The dominion of sin<sup>2</sup>, ever since the first man was brought under it, not only extends to the whole race but has complete possession of every soul" . . . "He who is most deeply abased and alarmed by the consciousness of his disgrace<sup>3</sup>, nakedness, want and misery has made the greatest progress /

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1. Ibid. Fol. 59.

2. Calvin. Vol. I. p. 222.

3. Ibid. Vol. I. p. 231.

progress in the knowledge of himself - Man is in no danger of taking too much from himself, provided he learns that whatever he wants is to be recovered in God." The authoritative standards - the Creeds and Confessions - of both Lutheran and Reformed Churches, speak in this matter with one voice, though with varying emphases; and we propose to adduce specimens of their testimony later on under the heading of The Extent of Sin, for the differences among them here are only of degree and not of kind.

Puritan theology in no wise diminishes, but rather intensifies, the orthodox Protestant emphasis on sin. In this respect its position is on the extreme right wing of the Protestant army. The Puritan temperament, with its stern and serious outlook upon life, may be trusted to do full justice to the tragic fact of sin, and it does not disappoint this expectation. Indeed its critics assert that it falls into over-emphasis and therefore distortion. The Puritan attitude may be exemplified by quotation from Doddridge's religious classic, "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul" (1745). Though considerably later than Bunyan, he may be justifiably selected as a representative exponent of Puritan teaching. He thus propounds the /

the need of the sense of sin:- "I would<sup>1</sup> now endeavour, in the first place, with all the seriousness I can, to make you heartily sensible of your guilt before God. For I well know, that unless you are convinced of this, and affected with the conviction, all the provisions of gospel grace will be slighted, and your soul infallibly destroyed, in the midst of the noblest means appointed for its recovery." This, as the preliminary to the Christian life when the sinner is "arraigned and convicted" - All excuses and palliations are to be brushed aside because they "break"<sup>2</sup> the force of conviction, which is the happiest token of approaching deliverance". Nor is the sense of sin to be allowed to disappear when "deliverance" has come. Among certain "branches of the Christian temper" we find the following:- "And"<sup>3</sup> especially, you will be deeply sensible of your guilt; the remembrance of which will fill you with shame and confusion, even when you have some reason to hope it is forgiven." To "assist the doubting soul in its inquiries as to the sincerity of its faith and repentance" we find the following:- Vain<sup>4</sup> are all your religious hopes, if there has not been cordial humiliation before /

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1. Doddridge p. 52  
 2. ibid p. 72.  
 3. ibid p. 217.  
 4. ibid p. 203.

before the presence of God for all your sins . . . . if there has not been this sense of your need of Christ, and of your ruin without Him." To bring the testimony of Puritanism on this matter down to date, we quote the following from the late Dr. Alexander Whyte whose right to speak on behalf of modern Puritanism no one can deny:-

"Peter examined<sup>1</sup> Dante in heaven on faith, James examined him on hope, and John took him through his catechism on love . . . . I do not know who the examiner on sin will be, but, speaking for myself on this matter, I would rather take my degree in that subject than in all the other subjects set for a sinner's examination on earth or in heaven. For to know myself, and especially, as the wise man says, to know the plague of my own heart is the true and the only key to all other true knowledge."

No writer subscribes more decisively to the traditional Puritan view of sin, as indicated above, than does Bunyan. Indeed, if we may say so, he 'out-Puritans' the rest of the Puritans, and doubly emphasises what had already been deeply underlined. The Puritan attitude to sin exactly fitted his nature and temperament. He found it eminently thorough-going and satisfying. He found it true /

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1. Bunyan Characters Vol. I. pp. 57 - 8.

true to the reality of his own spiritual experience. He betrays no trace of sympathy with the common criticism that the Puritan view of life is altogether too solemn and its picture of sin altogether too black. The scientific theologian in these days does not necessarily feel called upon to submit an "Apologia pro vita sua". Science prides itself upon its objectivity and impersonality, and there is a proverb which deprecates the display of the heart upon the sleeve. The said proverb, so much honoured in our time, had no terrors for Bunyan. His motto rather would be, "pectus facit theologum". He does not shrink from the use of the first person singular. In "Grace Abounding" he takes us into his confidence, and lays bare before us his heart and his life. Autobiographies are by no means unknown in our day, but few of them penetrate deeper than "the outside of the inside." Few indeed have dared to expose their own inner life with such frankness as Bunyan. Having the narrative of his own experience before us, we can well understand how the sense of sin came to bulk so large in his teaching, the obvious explanation being that it had previously held a dominant place in his own inner life. Bunyan's doctrine of /

of sin is plainly a transcript of his own spiritual history and development. "Grace Abounding" proves conclusively that he is of the order of the "experimental" divines. His life sheds a flood of light upon his teaching; indeed his life explains his teaching. More than most religious teachers he can make good the claim to know what he is talking about.

There are few writers of his own period or of any period whom it is possible for us to know so intimately as Bunyan. In his case knowledge of the man is certainly relevant to knowledge of his theology, and the former may be said to be as accessible to us as the latter. The other Puritan divines are to us little more than names to which is attached a catalogue of theological works. But, thanks to his own self-revelation, the figure of John Bunyan stands out clear and well-defined. It is open to us to become acquainted with his remarkable personality and his striking and stormy spiritual history. These cannot be disregarded in any sketch of his theology. His views will be more clearly understood and more readily accounted for, when considered side by side with the illuminating contest of his character and life.

By /

By natural temperament he was predisposed to the Puritan outlook. He was constitutionally sensitive, even neurotic. The following is the diagnosis of William James<sup>1</sup>:- He was a typical case of the psychopathic temperament, sensitive of conscience to a diseased degree, beset by doubts, fears, and insistent ideas, and a victim of verbal automatisms, both motor and sensory . . . . Added to this were a fearful melancholy self-contempt and despair." He was evidently, by nature, a "sick soul", far-removed in temperament from the optimism of the "healthy-minded". In this respect he is to be classified as a Puritan born as well as made. He testifies<sup>2</sup> that from early childhood he had a personal knowledge both of sin and of the sense of sin. He has no memories of an innocent and idyllic youth to recall. Unlike Wordsworth, his early years furnished him with no "intimations" of a happy immortality. The black shadow lay across his path from the outset, and many weary years had to be traversed ere it was lifted. After his wonted manner he speaks in unmeasured condemnation of his sins when of the tender age of only nine or ten; and it is significant that conscience registered her protest from the first. If he sinned as a /

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1. The Varieties of Religious Experience p. 157.  
 2. Of for I. p. 6.



a child, he also suffered as a child - and that acutely. Upon the heels of such sins as swearing and lying there followed even in these early days the sense of sin in the shape of "fearful dreams", "dreadful visions", "thoughts of the day of judgment . . and of the fearful torments of hell fire." As we read this painful record, we can but say that of a truth "the child is father of the man". Here is a precocious prophecy of the Bunyan that is to be.

To pass to later years, Bunyan has left a forbidding enough picture of his character in adolescence and early manhood - a picture which has been diversely interpreted. Was Bunyan as black as he paints himself? That question has been much canvassed, and its true answer trembles in the balance. This much, however, is beyond doubt. There was a period of carelessness, more or less flagrant, punctuated with increasing frequency towards its close by touches of misgiving and flashes of alarm. Then the storm broke, and the thunders of conscience crashed and reverberated in his soul. He was now convinced and convicted of his sin. He was now awakened. His carelessness was now effectually dispelled, having given place to alarm and even terror. Not infrequently he trembled on the /

the brink of sheer despair, so overwhelming was his sense of sin. This spiritual condition was of long duration and of altogether exceptional intensity in Bunyan's case. On his own admission he "lay<sup>1</sup>. . long at Sinai," appalled by "the fire, and the cloud and the darkness." He suffered a protracted agony of doubt and fear of which he has left a detailed record so terrible that we can only wonder that he emerged from it with a sane mind. We can but say that he has indeed qualified to speak with authority on the sense of sin. Awakenment slowly merged into enlightenment. His alarm was at intervals mitigated by comforting messages shot, as it were, into his soul. At first the relief was only temporary. The clouds which had seemed to scatter gathered again after the rain. His old questionings and doubtings returned upon him. For long he oscillated between hope and fear, but at last faith won the day, and Bunyan escaped from the Slough of Despond and found solid ground beneath his feet. To the end, however, the Christian life was to him a conflict with sin whose victorious issue was only to be reached when he entered the Celestial City.

The sins which Bunyan lays to his own charge would seem /

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1. *ibid* p. 4.

seem at this point to require mention and estimate. His view in later years of his character as a boy has already been touched upon; "I<sup>1</sup> had but few equals," he declares, "especially considering my years which were tender, being few, both for cursing, swearing, lying and blaspheming the holy name of God." His early manhood, he indicates, showed increasing development and stronger entrenchment of the evil, so that, until I came to the state of marriage, I was the very ringleader of all the youth that kept me company, unto all manner of vice and ungodliness." In "The Jerusalem Sinner Saved" (1688) he says, "I<sup>2</sup> was one of these lousy ones, one of these great sin-breeders; I infected all the youth of the town where I was born, with all manner of youthful vanities." Passing judgment on his early life he owns that he "took<sup>3</sup> much delight in all manner of vice." And there is more to the same purport.

The indictment seems sufficiently explicit and damning. The only question is whether it is to be taken literally and at its face value. When occasion required, Bunyan could defend himself and his personal character effectively and vigorously as witness the following:-<sup>4</sup>

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- 1. Offor I. 6.
  - 2. Offor I. 79.
  - 3. Offor I. 8.
  - 4. Offor I. 46.

"If all the fornicators and adulterers in England were hanged by the neck till they be dead, John Bunyan, the object of their envy, would be still alive and well."

This self-vindication was evoked by attacks on his personal chastity after he had become a Christian minister; it applies in the first instance to his record as a Christian. But the whole passage in which it appears seems to make it quite clear that it is intended also to cover his unregenerate days. Brown<sup>1</sup> takes it as a 'passionate denial that he had even been unchaste.' If that be so, Bunyan has a cleaner record than St. Augustine, and his "delight in all manner of vice" is manifestly an exaggeration. Brown further holds that he "was never a drunkard," and that his sins were rather of the spirit than of the flesh, which was true at least of his later days when, having risen to eminence in the Church he acknowledged that "spiritual pride"<sup>2</sup> was his easily besetting sin, and that he needed the thorn in the flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure." On the other hand, Griffith<sup>3</sup>, a more recent biographer, declares for a more literal acceptance of Bunyan's own testimony regarding his early life and stresses /

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1. Brown I. p. 58.

2. Offor I. p. LXXVII.

3. The Human Story of John Bunyan.

stresses such passages as the following from "The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded" (1659):- "When<sup>1</sup> it pleased the Lord to begin to instruct my soul, He found me one of the black sinners of the world; He found me making a sport of oaths and also of lies; and many a soul-poisoning meal did I make out of divers lusts, as drinking, dancing, playing, pleasure with the wicked ones of the world" - Such descriptions, Griffith holds, can hardly justify Macaulay's portrait of Bunyan as a "model young man" but they rather lend colour to Southey's judgment that he was "something of a young blackguard." Griffith, on his own reading of the evidence, finds it impossible to second the efforts of such as Froude and Macaulay to whitewash Bunyan. His view is that just as Christian is, within limits, Bunyan himself "from his conversion onwards," so Mr Badman, within limits, is Bunyan himself" in his childhood and youth.

The two views above stated will probably always find their respective champions. They rest upon divergent interpretations of the same statements, and until further evidence is forthcoming, much can be said on both sides. Bunyan's truthfulness as a witness against himself is, no doubt /

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1. Offor I. p. 548.

doubt, to be accepted without demur. We acquit him of any intention to make a false impression. But that does not rule out the possibility of unconscious exaggeration. From his later standpoint his early life would appear in very dark colours even if it had been comparatively blameless. He believed in magnifying the grace of God which involved magnifying his own sinfulness. He believed that, before God, every human being should rank himself as the chief of sinners. These considerations must be taken into account when such a man as Bunyan enters the witness-box to give evidence against himself.

Whether Bunyan in his youth sinned grievously or not in comparison with his fellow-men, is open to doubt. This much, however, is certain - he developed an abnormal sense of sin, which, of course, is no proof that his sins were necessarily, abnormally heinous. "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners" is, throughout, an impressive monument in lasting remembrance of Bunyan's overwhelming sense of personal sin. It may be questioned if, in all literature, there is any document to be compared to it, as the record of the tortures of a conscience-stricken and sin-wounded soul. The sense of sin is writ large over its pages, and /

and many poignant passages cry out for quotation in this connection. The first mutterings of the coming tempest were heard in his childish dreams and terrors. His youthful carelessness showed signs of breaking up when, under his wife's influence, he began to read books of devotion and to attend church assiduously. It was a sermon on Sabbath-breaking that showed him what guilt was, and dealt a blow at his legalistic self-complacency. Later that same day he was playing a game at tip-cat when the sense of wrong-doing and of the disapproval of the Lord Jesus was suddenly borne in upon him. The voice of conscience, thus aroused, could not be silenced. It pursued him even when he plunged desperately into sin, thinking that he "had<sup>1</sup> as good be damned for many sins, as to be damned for few." A woman's reproof for swearing cut him to the quick and was followed by "some<sup>2</sup> outward reformation." His life and manners underwent a change for the better, and the neighbours began to consider him a very godly man. He was now converted from "prodigious profaneness" to something like a moral life. But manifestly the one thing needful was wanting. He was engaged in the futile effort to establish his own righteousness; as yet he "knew not Christ, nor grace, nor faith, nor hope."

Genuine /

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1. Offor I. p. 8.

2. Offor I. p. 9.

Genuine enlightenment first broke upon him in homely guise. The happiest and most memorable day in his spiritual history was that on which he heard at Bedford "three<sup>1</sup> or four poor women sitting at a door in the sun talking about the things of God." They introduced him to a line of thought which promised, and which actually in the end achieved, his deliverance. Their manifest joy and peace stirred his wonder and his envy. He set himself to explore the foundations of their confidence, and he began to make the acquaintance of such evangelical doctrines as the new birth, the love of God in Christ, the insufficiency of man's righteousness and the all-sufficiency of the Redeemer's. For further guidance his instructors referred him to John Gifford, their pastor.

From this period John Bunyan's conversion is to be dated. Awakening had now passed into the first beams of dawning enlightenment, but it was long ere it developed into the noon-tide of assured confidence. He was now travelling in the right direction, but it was long ere he enjoyed any lasting freedom from the burden of sin. From time to time he was entrapped in some Slough of Despond, from which he escaped only after painful and prolonged efforts. /

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1. *ibid* p. 10.



efforts. He was not translated immediately and permanently from alarm to confidence, from doubt and fear to joy and peace. From the sense of sin he suffered much even after his conversion. Periods of spiritual perturbation alternated frequently with periods of comparative tranquillity. The greater part of "Grace Abounding" may be described as Bunyan's record of his experiences in the Slough of Despond, of which in his own words this is the interpretation:- This slough "is the descent whither the scum and filth that attends conviction for sin doth continually run, and therefore it is called the Slough of Despond; for still, as the sinner is awakened about his lost condition, there ariseth in his soul many fears, and doubts, and discouraging apprehensions, which all of them get together and settle in this place." Side by side with those words Dr. Whyte<sup>1</sup> places the following section from "Grace Abounding", as an illuminating commentary upon them:-

"My original and inward pollution, that, that was my plague and my affliction; that, I say, at a dreadful rate was always putting itself forth within me; that I had the guilt of to amazement; by reason of that I was more loathsome in my own eyes than a toad; and I thought I was so in God's /

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1. Ofor p. 16. para. 84 quoted in "Bunyan Characters"  
Vol. I. p. 46.

God's eyes also. Sin and corruption would bubble up out of my heart as naturally as water bubbles up out of a fountain. I thought now that everyone had a better heart than I had. I could have changed heart with anybody. I thought none but the devil himself could equalise me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. I fell, therefore, at the sight of my own vileness, deeply into despair, for I concluded that this condition in which I was in could not stand with a life of grace. Sure, thought I, I am forsaken of God; sure I am given up to the devil, and to a reprobate mind; and thus I continued a long while, even for some years together." That passage is so far from being exceptional that it is typical of many. There was a period in Bunyan's life, extending on his own admission, for some years, when the state of mind therein depicted could be truthfully described as chronic. Here is one other similar confession<sup>1</sup>:- "The beasts, birds, fishes, &c., I blessed their condition, for they had not a sinful nature, they were not obnoxious to the wrath of God; they were not to go to hell fire after death; I could therefore have rejoiced, had my condition been as any of theirs."

Bunyan /

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1. Offor Vol. I. p. 16.

Bunyan was slow indeed to appropriate to himself the comfort of the Gospel. He had an unhappy and morbid knack of searching out every discouraging verse of Scripture and applying it to himself. He was ever asking himself in trepidation and alarm, 'Lord, is it I?' He<sup>1</sup> feared that he had committed the unpardonable sin. He placed himself, in some moods, in the same category as Cain, Esau and Judas. He compared his condition with the "dreadful" story of that miserable mortal, Francis Spira. He thought that his sin was<sup>2</sup> "point blank" against his Saviour. Clearly he was many times within an ace of spiritual despair. From the sense of sin he suffered untold and protracted agonies. We can scarcely escape from the conclusion that at this period he was suffering from a "mind diseased" and that "some<sup>3</sup> frenzy distemper had got into his head." His writings amply show him to have been by no means destitute of the "saving grace" of humour but, at this period, he felt his plight to be much too serious to be in any way taken lightly. The bow of his mental and spiritual strength was stretched almost to the breaking point, and he would not allow himself any slight or temporary /

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1. Offor Vol. I. p. 24.

2. Ibid, p. 26.

3. Pilgrims Progress p. 14.

temporary relaxation of the awful strain. His case would probably be diagnosed by a modern physician as acute nervous break-down or as religious melancholia which is commonly regarded as the most hopeless form of insanity. But Bunyan himself would have rejected any such explanation of his trouble. To him the seat of his malady was not his mind but his soul. In his own view he was suffering from nothing more nor less than the sense of sin. "Grace Abounding" is not to be dismissed as the ravings of a disordered mind. To this criticism Bunyan's unhesitating answer would be 'I am not mad; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.' It was no alienist but a humble evangelist that at last wrought his cure.

Whatever view we take of Bunyan's trying experience, it is manifest that he made a narrow escape from the clutches of Giant Despair. Doubting Castle is just a later recurrence of the Slough of Despond, and it is significant that it rears its gloomy towers far on in the Christian pilgrimage. On Bunyan's view the sense of sin can never be outgrown in this imperfect earthly life. But - to return to the early stages of his spiritual history - there are several remarkable features that strike a present-day observer. One wonders that his daily work and /

and family cares did not draw off his mind from his gloomy reflections. How did he find time for them? How could he afford to allow them to monopolise his thoughts and sap his energies? One can scarcely imagine that a working-man of our time would have leisure for such experiences, even if he had the inclination. He would have to find for himself in a much shorter period than "some years together" some "solvitur ambulando", some "everlasting yea" to dispel his spiritual depression and doubt and to enable him to get on with daily duty. Further, Bunyan's observation of himself, as recorded in his autobiography, is remarkable. He carried the process of introspection to altogether unusual lengths and depths. He gives a detailed and particular account of the changes in his inward state. Could he have been observing himself all the while and noting down all the symptoms? To combine self-detachment and self-absorption in such a manner would surely be a wonderful feat. Could he have been patient and physician at one and the same time? The natural explanation of the minute record he has left us of these early days would seem to be that he had a very retentive memory and that the impression of these experiences had been stamped upon his mind as with a red-hot iron, and afterwards recalled and set down in cold /

cold print. His recurring and prolonged distress, his highly-developed sense of sin are no doubt to be ascribed to his keenly sensitive conscience. Moreover, he was not one of those who desire ease at any price. He would not rest in probabilities, if certainties were at all to be obtained. He would not suffer his hurt to be healed slightly. He would not be satisfied with a facile and superficial cure. No salvation to him was worthy of the name unless it were "by<sup>1</sup> the right way."

Before we pass from this special topic there remains one question to which an answer should be attempted. Does Bunyan expect his personal experience of the sense of sin to be universal or even normal? There is a sense in which he paid a great price for his freedom. Is a similar price to be exacted from all? Does he insist that every genuine Christian's experience must conform to his type?

He was always faithful in preaching the truth as it had come home to himself. His early treatises and discourses in particular are full of the 'terror of the Lord', reflecting his own spiritual alarms and distresses. Brown, for instance, notes<sup>2</sup> that "Sighs from Hell" (1658) was written /

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1. Ofor I. p. 16.

2. Brown I. p. 114.

written at a period in his life-experience when as yet love had not cast out fear." It is interesting to trace the evolution of Bunyan's preaching as he grew older. He becomes mellower and more winsome and takes increasing pleasure in such themes as "The Saint's Knowledge of Christ's Love" (1692). Indeed there are passages whose rapture are reminiscent of Samuel Rutherford. The element of sternness and fear never, by any means, disappears, but it no longer monopolises or dominates the whole picture. As he grew older, he came to see more and more clearly that love is a higher and stronger motive than fear. He<sup>1</sup> has left us an interesting outline of the substance of his teaching before his imprisonment showing clearly how it reflected and reproduced his own experience stage by stage, from which we quote the following:- "In my preaching of the word, I took special notice of this one thing, namely, that the Lord did lead me to begin where His word begins with sinners; that is, to condemn all flesh, and to open and allege that the curse of God, by the law, doth belong to, and lay hold on all men as they come into the world, because of sin. Now this part of my work I fulfilled with great sense (i.e. feeling); for the /

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1. Offor Vol. I. p. 42.

the terrors of the law, and guilt for my transgressions, lay heavy on my conscience. I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel, even that under which my poor soul did groan and tremble to astonishment. Indeed I have been as one sent to them from the dead; I went myself in chains to preach to them in chains; and carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded them to beware of . . . . Thus I went for the space of two years, crying out against men's sins, and their fearful state because of them. After which the Lord came in upon my own soul with some staid peace and comfort through Christ; for He did give me many sweet discoveries of His blessed grace through Him. Wherefore now I altered in my preaching, for still I preached what I saw and felt; now therefore I did labour to hold forth Jesus Christ in all His offices, relations and benefits unto the world; and did strive also to discover to condemn, and remove those false supports and props on which the world doth both lean, and by them fall and perish. On these things also I staid as long as on the other. After this, God led me into something of the mystery of union with Christ; wherefore that I discovered and showed to them also. And when I had travelled through these three chief points, about the space /



space of five years or more I was . . . cast into prison."

Bunyan's teaching faithfully interprets and expounds his own spiritual experience, and, like all who feel keenly, he would naturally be inclined to view with suspicion any divergence from his type. Every man can speak, in the first place, authoritatively only for himself. The sick man who has been cured can only testify to the medicine which brought him personal relief, and state his strong presumption that the same course of treatment will prove beneficial to others similarly afflicted. Bunyan frankly gives his own experience. He sets before us God's way with his individual soul. He testifies that he suffered keenly, but he also indicates that the subsequent relief made the previous suffering well worth while, indeed that the grateful relief would not have been appreciated but for the intense suffering which was its more or less indispensable precursor. "I<sup>1</sup> will say unto you again that, in general, He was pleased to take this course with me; first, to suffer me to be afflicted with temptation concerning them (i.e. His own being, and the being of His Son, and Spirit, and Word, and Gospel) and then reveal them to me: as sometimes I should lie under great guilt /

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1. Offor I. p. 21.

guilt for sin, even crushed to the ground therewith, and then the Lord would show me the death of Christ; yea, and so sprinkle my conscience with His blood, that I should find, and that before I was aware, that in that conscience where but just now did reign and rage the law, even there would rest and abide the peace and love of God through Christ." He goes the length of saying:- "The guilt of sin did help me much, for still as that would come upon me, the blood of Christ did take it off again, and again, and again, and that too, sweetly, according to the Scriptures" -

Such was his personal experience, but we have evidence that he leaves a certain margin of latitude for variety of religious experience. In "Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ" (1678)<sup>1</sup> we have the following:- "God hath more ways than thou knowest of to bring a sinner to Jesus Christ . . . . It is not the over-heavy load of sin, but the discovery of mercy; not the roaring of the devil, but the drawing of the Father that makes a man come to Jesus Christ, - I myself know all these things. True, sometimes, yea most an end, they that come to Christ come . . the loading, tempted way; but the Lord also leads some /

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1. Offor Vol. I. p. 286.

some by the waters of comfort." These significant words with their sweet poetical cadence well merit repetition. John Bunyan, his own painful experience notwithstanding, is fain to admit that "the Lord also leads some by the waters of comfort." He grants that there are true Christians whose pathway has not been nearly so rough and toilsome as his. He might even agree with his editor<sup>1</sup> that his own was "a very extraordinary case" - But that does not mean that he is prepared to dispense with the necessity of the sense of sin. He is not prepared to include such a "variety" as that within the field of genuine Christian experience. He insists that in some real form the sense of sin must be present in every Christian heart. It may be more or less acute, and more or less protracted in different cases, but in some shape its presence is essential. In the following sentence which, be it noted, follows closely upon his allusion to "the waters of comfort" he states in the hypothetical clauses what he regards as the irreducible minimum of qualification for the Christian salvation:- "If<sup>2</sup> thou seest thy lost condition by original and actual sin; if thou seest thy need of the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ; if thou art willing to be found /

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1. Ofor Vol. I. p. 3.  
 2. Ofor Vol. I. p. 286.

found in Him, and to take up thy cross and follow Him;  
then pray for fair wind and good weather, and come away."

SECTION B.      -      CONTENT.

(2) The Nature of Sin.

SECTION B. - CONTENT.(2) The Nature of Sin.

A general impression of Bunyan's view of sin such as we have sought to give, may justifiably be held to include the sum and substance of his teaching on this point. For his interests are not nearly so much intellectual as practical, and his thinking is not as a rule presented in scientific form. With a view to clearness, however, it would seem to be an unavoidable duty to explore his writings in order to discover and arrange his pronouncements under the various branches of this great topic, and to ascertain his answers to certain questions which confront every student who seeks to investigate the subject of sin. We proceed, therefore, to consider Bunyan's teaching under the four great heads of the Nature, the Source, the Extent and the Consequences of Sin.

We take first, then, Bunyan's view of the Nature of Sin. What is the distinctive character of that mysterious, yet familiar entity, known as sin? The manifestations of life are superabundant; its forms are many and various. But life in itself is provokingly elusive, and we have not yet /

yet reached an adequate and universally accepted definition of its essence. In this respect sin may be compared with life. Bunyan gives<sup>1</sup> a lengthy catalogue of gross sinners including drunkards, liars, covetous persons, fornicators and thieves, but he does not attempt to make his enumeration complete and exclusive. He winds up his list with the words "and the like". Clearly, on his view, sin is hydra-headed. Its inner essence, whatever it may be, clothes itself in various outward shapes. But he does attempt to introduce order and classification into this bewildering multiplicity of form. He recognised<sup>2</sup> sins of condition (original sin) as well as actual sins, and was fully cognisant of the distinction between them. Moreover, he was familiar with certain other subordinate principles of classification, as the following quotation<sup>3</sup> proves:- "I beseech thee consider that thou art under the wrath of Almighty God, and hast been so ever since thou camest into the world (Eph. II. 1, 2), being then in thy first parents, thou didst transgress against thy maker . . . Besides the many SINS thou hast committed ever since thou wast born: sins against the law of God, and sins against the gospel of the grace of God; sins against /

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1. Offor Vol I. p. 541.

2. Ibid I. p. 186.

3. Ibid II. p. 136.

against the long-suffering and forbearance of God, and sins against His judgments; sins of omission, and sins of commission, in thoughts, words, and actions." Sin is clearly, on Bunyan's view, a very comprehensive term. Its adequate definition must cover, according to him, not only certain acts of voluntary and deliberate choice but also the condition in which every member of the race finds himself at birth.

Elastic though the conception of sin may be, the endeavour must be made to delimit its sphere. If we cannot decide, at any rate in general terms, as to what sin is, then the raison d'etre for the appearance of the word in our vocabulary has disappeared. Though we cannot define the nature of life, we retain the term, because at least it lays down a line of division, which we all recognise, between itself and that which is dead. Similarly the existence and employment of the term, sin, involve a distinction. It has been introduced and it is used to mark it off from that to which it does not apply. So the question as to the essence of sin arises and persists. We must deal not merely with the numberless heads of the hydra; we must have some theory of the common body from which they spring.

Various /



Various attempts have been made to reduce to one principle the many forms of sin. These are adequately stated and appraised by Hodge in his monumental *Systematic Theology*<sup>1</sup>. Metaphysical investigations of the problem were outwith Bunyan's horizon. He was no philosopher, and philosophical theories were beyond his depth. The ancient Manichaeian theory that matter is inherently evil and that, therefore, the essence of sin is carnality would not be acceptable to one whose sins were mainly of the spiritual order. Though Bunyan would readily admit that fleshliness slays its thousands, yet he saw clearly that it was, by no means, the only enemy of the soul, for he testified<sup>2</sup> that spiritual pride was, at least in later days, his "easily besetting sin." Carnality, therefore, though disastrous and deadly enough, could not be stretched so far as to be made co-terminous with sin.

Scarcely more satisfactory in Bunyan's eyes would be the specious theory that the essence of all sin is selfishness. This view has much to commend it, and it has gained wide modern acceptation. It is in harmony with the spirit of our age which has awakened out of narrow individualism /

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1. Vol. II. p. 133 sqq.

2. *Offer* Vol. I. p. LXXVII.

individualism into some realisation of social duty and responsibility. But it must be remembered that religion is not to be identified with philanthropy, and such an one as Bunyan could never forget that sin is an offence directed primarily against God. The 'selfishness' view of sin as commonly held is in many cases a deplorable testimony to our weakened sense of the reality of God. Bunyan would have no hesitation in making his own the Psalmist's confession, 'Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned' - But it rises with difficulty to the lips of one whose creed it is that sin is selfishness. It should be added, however, that to the 'selfishness' theory as presented by Müller little exception need be taken, for he argues that "the real<sup>1</sup> principle of sin consists in putting self in the place of God." The last five words are significant, and, if duly emphasized, they disarm the theory of much of its apparent objectionableness. Even so, however, Hodge<sup>2</sup> argues against Müller that there is such a thing as disinterested sin, and there is cogency in his argument. Müller's form of the 'selfishness' theory is illuminating and, we had almost said, convincing. We confess to a strong partiality in its favour. But it would seem to come /

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1. Hodge Vol. II. p. 148.

2. Ibid 149.

come short of the necessary comprehensiveness.

Akin to this, is the theory of Luther, who in his commentary on the Galatians puts forward the view that the essential and fundamental sin is pride. We quote the following:- "Pride<sup>1</sup> (as Augustine truly saith) is the mother of all heresies, or rather the headspring of all sin and confusion - which thing all histories, as well holy as profane, do witness." This is the fault of those who are "greedy of glory" and who "seek their own and not that which is of Jesus Christ". This is that selfishness or self-worship which puts self in the place of God.

By way of criticism of Luther's view, it may be stated that, as a generic term, pride in this connection is less satisfactory, because less inclusive, than selfishness. The truth is that sin and its essence may be viewed from different standpoints. From the viewpoint of the law it is lawlessness. From the viewpoint of the Gospel it is unbelief. The personal equation enters largely into every man's estimate of sin. Having decided what, for us, is the "Greatest Thing in the World", we naturally and logically relegate its opposite to its place as the least /

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1. Luther on the Galatians. Fol. 263 B.

least. The choice of our summum bonum involves the choice of our infimum malum. If we give our vote for humility as the chiefest Christian grace, we shall regard its opposite, pride, as the greatest of sins, it being the essential darkness from the standpoint of our light. Luther assigns to pride its unenviable pre-eminence, because he discerned in it the chief enemy to the reception of his beloved doctrine of justification by faith. Human pride plumes itself upon its good works, and is loth to surrender all claim to personal merit. The "merit-mongers" and their like were Luther's Bête noire, and on his view none were farther from the Kingdom of God than they - and that by reason of their pride. Such is Luther's line of thought, and no doubt there are many whom pride precludes from the Christian salvation. But, on the other hand, there are those whose humility or sense of personal unworthiness drives them to despair. Luther, himself, frequently testifies that desperation is a terrible danger threatening ruin to the awakened sinner. There are those who refuse to embrace the Gospel because they consider themselves unworthy of eternal life, and their sin, whatever it be, can scarcely be described as pride.

It /

It may be argued with considerable force that, on Bunyan's view, neither carnality, or selfishness, nor even pride, but unbelief is the essence of sin. In his "Exposition"<sup>1</sup> of the First Ten Chapters of Genesis there occurs the following in his commentary on Genesis III. 6:- "The woman admitted of a doubt about the truth of the word that forbad her to eat; for unbelief was the first sin that entered the world." With this may be compared Calvin's pronouncement<sup>2</sup> on Adam's fall:- "Infidelity was the root of the revolt." Among the Christian graces Bunyan assigns the primacy to faith. It is, in his eyes, the essential and fundamental qualification on the part of man for salvation from sin. He was a staunch upholder of the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith. To those who give the palm to love, selfishness, the antithesis of love, would seem to be logically the essence of sin. On the other hand, if faith be regarded as the supreme requirement, then there is much to be said for those who consider unbelief as par excellence the enemy. Its attitude is directly contrasted with the simple receptiveness of the believer. So long as persisted in, it /

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1. Offor Vol. II. p. 431.

2. Institutes Vol. I. p. 213.

it maintains an insurmountable obstacle to salvation. Get rid of unbelief, and you are on the fair way to get rid of all other sins, sins of pride as well as sins of despair - by the exercise of faith. Retain unbelief, and you remain in sin because you have rejected the only cure for your disease. We have seen that, in his classification of sins, Bunyan finds a place for sins against the law and sins against the Gospel. Unbelief is, primarily, in Bunyan's view the deadly sin - he<sup>1</sup> calls it "that damning sin" - against the Gospel, but it is not confined to that sphere. It also occupies a place on the lower plane of the legal dispensation, as witness the foregoing quotations from Bunyan and Calvin. On that view, unbelief was historically the first sin, and there are good reasons for regarding it as "first" in other aspects as well. Those in search of the essence of sin might do well to terminate their quest at this point. There are few, if any, categories more inclusive and comprehensive than that of unbelief. It is an ingredient, probably the main ingredient in every sin. It is not merely an obliquity of intellectual vision; it is the chief disease of the whole moral nature, the chief barrier to the admission of the peace /

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1. Offor Vol. II. p. 136.

peace and inspiration of the Gospel. Dr. John Owen<sup>1</sup>, one of Bunyan's leading Puritan contemporaries, founding in particular on Rom. 8: 7 declares for the theory that indwelling sin is enmity against God. This perhaps may be subsumed under the heading of unbelief, of which it may be regarded as a more pronounced and deeper shade.

The theory that unbelief is the essence of sin may be extracted from Bunyan's writings, but we have not found it explicitly stated therein. He is content to accept the Scriptural definition - "A Sinner<sup>2</sup> in the Scripture is described in general to be a transgressor of the law - Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth the law; for sin is the transgression of the law (I. Jn. III. 4). Elsewhere<sup>3</sup> he defines sin as "a breach of His (God's) holy law." The question arises, cannot this definition be pushed farther back without sacrificing any of its comprehensiveness? Granted that sin is the transgression of the law, what is it that prompts to the said transgression? Is there any one inward principle in man which, in every case, may be identified as the root of the mischief? There are those who say that it is selfishness, and we have reason to believe that Bunyan would have /

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1. Owen Chap. IV.  
 2. Offor Vol. I. p. 541.  
 3. Offor Vol. I. p. 149.

have said, unbelief. But he was no spinner of new theories. He was not one of those who seek to be wiser than that which is written. For practical purposes he found the Scriptural definition to be amply sufficient and amply illuminating. His view of the nature of sin is identical with the general Protestant doctrine that "Sin<sup>1</sup> is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature." This, if widely enough interpreted, may be made to include all types of sin. Sin is opposition to the law and will of God, and this shows itself in omission of duty as well as commission of evil. It is a condition, an attitude of the heart, manifesting itself in overt deeds. This definition possesses the advantage of bringing to the forefront our attitude to God, which the 'selfishness' theory, in some at least of its forms, tends to obscure.

A knowledge of Bunyan's doctrine of the Law is essential to a true understanding of his view of the nature of sin. He defines sin in terms of the Law. Sin and the Law are closely related. The former is meaningless without the latter. It is in the mirror of the latter that the former stands revealed. The Law is the embodiment of that will of God which sin dares to oppose and transgress.

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1. The Larger Catechism Q. 24.



The Law bulks largely both in Bunyan's life and in his teaching. It was a theme that fascinated him. He had an extraordinary personal experience of the terrors of the Law. Only after much tribulation was he delivered from these - largely owing to the helpful guidance of Luther's Commentary on the Galatians to which he owns his grateful indebtedness and to whose handling of this theme, his own teaching lies under obligation. Bunyan's doctrine of the Law emerges at many points in his works, and one<sup>1</sup> of his lengthier treatises (on Rom. VI. 14) bears the title, "The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded."

What then, on Bunyan's view, are the nature and functions of the Law of God. He is sufficiently explicit on both points. For him, the law is embodied in a definite, concrete form. He agrees with the general Protestant and Reformed position thus defined in the Larger Catechism (Q. and A. 98):- "The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments . . ." He has a decided preference for the written word as against any vague and ill-defined doctrine of "the inner light". "This letter"<sup>2</sup> or law," he says in an exposition of 2 Cor. III. 6 and Galatians III. 10, "is not to be taken in the largest /

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1. Offor Vol. I. p. 497 sqq.

2. Offor Vol. III. p. 719.

largest sense, but is strictly to be tied to the ten commandments."

He is aware of the distinction between the moral and the ceremonial law, which he has occasion to use, and he teaches, on the usual orthodox lines, that the latter, having served its purpose, is no longer valid and binding.<sup>1</sup> "It (the ceremonial law) did continue in full force until He (Christ) did come into the world, and had done that which was by it held out for Him to do." Its "several types and shadows, as the blood of bulls and lambs with divers other services did lead to, or hold forth Christ that was to come" - He is wrongly inclined to believe that the text - 'The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ' (Gal. 3: 24) - applies only to the ceremonial law, and he bases this exegesis on the past tense 'was'. Faulty though his exposition is, it proves our point that Bunyan taught that the Christian is not amenable to that large part of the so-called mosaic dispensation known as the ceremonial law to which every loyal Jew sought to render obedience.

The law of God, then, is narrowed down to the ten commandments, which, however, be it noted, must be understood /

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1. Offor Vol. II. p. 190.

understood in terms of the wide interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount. "This law<sup>1</sup> doth not "only condemn words and actions, . . . but it hath authority to condemn the most secret thoughts of the heart, being evil". Though it may be expressed in few words, its scope and sweep are so wide as to include every sphere and every detail of human life. It touches and judges human character and conduct at every point. To qualify as a transgressor of the law, all that is necessary is to contravene it in one particular.

Historically, the law in its present form dates from Sinai. "The covenant<sup>2</sup> of works or the law . . . is the law delivered upon Mount Sinai to Moses, in two tables of stone, in ten particular branches or heads." But this does not mean that, before Moses, there was no law; "this was not the first appearing of the law to man." "In substance, though possibly not so openly," it was given to Adam in the Garden. He too had a commandment prescribed to him for obedience. Moreover, before Moses, men were punished for breaches of the ten commandments, a notable example of which is Cain.<sup>3</sup> The law was in existence and in force in germ and in essence before it was promulgated on /

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1. Offor Vol. I. p. 501.  
 2. Offor Vol. I. p. 498.  
 3. Ibid p. 499.

on Sinai. Bunyan holds that "the law given before by the Lord to Adam and his posterity is the same with that afterwards given on Sinai." The modern ethical doctrine of the evolution of morality from stage to stage, and the modern theological doctrine of the progressive revelation of the Divine law and will were almost a terra incognita in Bunyan's time. What outward form the ten commandments took in pre-mosaic days he does not indicate. It was sufficient for him that God adopted some method of communicating His law to man. The "inner light" offers a tempting solution. It might be held that Sinai only made explicit what had always been implicit, that Sinai wrote on tables of stone what had always been written on the tables of the heart. But Bunyan knew that it is sometimes hard to distinguish between the voice of God in man and the voice of man in man, and the Quaker view of God's revelation of Himself to man was too subjective for his liking. Since Sinai, every shadow of excuse on the ground of ignorance of the Divine Law has been scattered; we are now in possession of the law in perfectly definite form. "The<sup>1</sup> law given on Sinai was for the more clear discovery of those sins that were before committed against it; for though /

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1. Ofor I. p. 500.

though the very substance of the ten commandments were given in the Garden before they were received from Sinai, yet they lay so darkly in the heart of man, that his sins were not so clearly discovered as afterwards they were; therefore, saith the apostle, the law was added Gal. III. 19. Or, more plainly, given on Sinai, or Tables of Stone, that the offence might abound - that is that it might the more clearly be made manifest and appear. (Rom. V. 20)." The law might thus be likened to a poultice or fomentation which draws a festering sore to a head with a view to future evacuation and healing. But this is to trench upon the topic of the function of the law which we now approach.

Having considered the content of the law of God as understood by Bunyan, we now proceed to his view of its function. In this connection he makes use of two familiar metaphors. The law, he points out, operates in the life of man as a mirror which reveals to him his own defects and the standard to which he is expected to conform, and as a covenant to which he is one of the parties and which he is expected to fulfil and honour.

The 'mirror' or 'glass' analogy we find in such passages as the following:- "If<sup>1</sup> thou wouldst then wash thy face /

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1. Offer Vol. I. p. 494.

face clean, first take a glass and see where it is dirty; that is, if thou wouldst indeed have thy sins washed away by the blood of Christ, labour first to see them in the glass of the law, and do not be afraid to see thy besmeared condition, but look on every spot thou hast; for he that looks on the foulness of his face by the halves will wash by the halves; even so, he that looks on his sins by the halves, he will seek for Christ by the halves. Reckon thyself, therefore, I say, the biggest sinner in the world, and be persuaded that there is none worse than thyself; then let the guilt of it seize on thy heart, then also go in that case and condition to Jesus Christ, and plunge thyself into the virtue and merits of His blood; and after that, thou shalt speak of the things of the law and of the Gospel experimentally, and the very language of the children of God shall feelingly drop from thy lips and not till then". (James I.) . . . "Thou<sup>1</sup> canst not know the love of Christ, before thou knowest the badness of thy nature . . . He that sees himself but little will hardly know much of the love of Christ: he that sees of himself nothing at all, will hardly ever see anything of the love of Christ. But he that sees most of what an abominable wretch he is, he /

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1. Ofor Vol. II. p. 28.

he is like to see most of what is the love of Christ . . .

Now if thou wouldest know the badness of thy self begin in the first place to study the law, then thy heart, and so, thy life. The law thou must look into, for that's the glass; thy heart thou must look upon, for that's the face; thy life thou must look upon, for that's the body of a man as to religion (James I. 25). In these passages Bunyan indirectly acknowledges his indebtedness for the 'mirror' metaphor and its suggestions to the locus classicus in the General Epistle of St. James (I. 23 - 25). It is interesting to find the same analogy in another book with which Bunyan was familiar. We quote the following from Luther's commentary on the Galatians<sup>1</sup>, which passage also sheds light on his view of the function of the law:-

"Paul answereth therefore to this question: If the law do not justify, to what end serveth it? Although, saith he, it justify not, yet it is very profitable and necessary. For first, it easily restraineth such as are carnal, rebellious and obstinate. Moreover, it is a glass that sheweth unto a man himself, that he is a sinner, guilty of death, and worthy of God's everlasting wrath and indignation. To what profit serveth this humbling, this bruising and /

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1. p. 147, 148.

and beating down by this hammer, the law, I mean. - To great profit; namely that we may have an entrance into grace." . . . "For the office and use of the law is not only to reveal sin and the wrath of God but also to drive men unto Christ."

The 'covenant' category, as we may call it, furnishes the basis of certain of the classic formulae of the Reformed theology. It is conspicuously in evidence in the Westminster Confession and its subsidiary catechisms. Into the mould thus provided for him Bunyan poured his thought. The contrasted terms, "Covenant of Works" and "Covenant of Grace" figure in his writings synonymously with those of Law and Gospel.<sup>1</sup> In his "Map"<sup>2</sup> showing the Order and Causes of Salvation and Damnation" two lines are represented as proceeding from the Deity - the Line of Grace based on the Covenant of Grace and issuing finally in salvation, and the Line of Justice based on the Covenant of Works and issuing finally in Damnation. The term 'Covenant' may have become archaic; modern theology, whether popular or technical, makes scant use of the word. But a better has not yet been devised to take its place. It brings into prominence the Personality from /

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1. e.g. Offor Vol. I. p. 498.

2. Offor Vol. III. p. 374.



from Whom both law and gospel proceed, and with Whom man has to do. It reminds us that, in the great transaction of salvation, two parties are concerned. It sharpens and makes precise the point of relevance both of the law and of the gospel to man. These affect us because they embody the substance of the terms of the understanding between God and man. They lay down the conditions on which man may hope to live at peace with God. Every metaphor, no doubt, has its limitations, but any creed which conserves the Personality of the Deity can scarcely with consistency sacrifice the 'covenant' metaphor without introducing some allied substitute.

Of the two covenants Bunyan clearly asserts that priority in existence belongs to the Covenant of Grace, which is fundamental. It is a significant fact, often overlooked or obscured, that, in spite of its harshness and severity, the Puritan theology assigns basal importance to the grace and love of God. It is true that the covenant of works was the first that was manifested to man, but this was only as a necessary preparation for the emergence of the other, which was then not non-existent but only temporarily in the background. From all eternity the Covenant of Grace was made with Christ, man's ideal Representative /

Representative. As Adam stands for mankind under the Covenant of Works, so Christ stands and has always stood for mankind under the Covenant of Grace.<sup>1</sup> The terms of the two covenants exhibit a remarkable contrast. "The<sup>2</sup> covenant of grace is not grounded upon our obedience (as is the covenant of works) but upon God's love, even His pardoning love to us through Christ Jesus." It must be added that all men<sup>3</sup> are under either the one covenant or the other.

The covenant of works with which we are directly concerned here is thus stated by Bunyan:- "To be under the law as it is a covenant of works, is to be bound, upon pain of eternal damnation, to fulfil, and that completely and continually, every particular point of the ten commandments, by doing them - Do this, and then thou shalt live; otherwise, 'cursed is every one that continueth not in all,' in every particular thing or things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' (Gal. III. 10). Bunyan will tolerate no relaxation of the law's demands. With remorseless and irrefutable logic he sets them forth and develops them without abating jot or tittle. It is characteristic of him to seek to do full justice to the /

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1. Offor Vol I. p. 524.

2. Offor Vol. I. p. 550.

3. Ibid p. 494.

the law's rigorous requirements; to this topic he returns again and again in his writings. He is anxious to demonstrate, beyond a doubt, the utter folly and hopelessness of seeking for salvation by the works of the law. The text from Galatians (III. 10) quoted above, which is based on Deuteronomy (XXVII. 26) is, with him, an oft-quoted favourite in this connection. It forms the peroration of Evangelist's scathing speech to Christian<sup>1</sup> when convicting him of his guilt in forsaking the way of life in favour of Mr Worldly Wiseman's recommendation of the methods of Legality. No writer surpasses Bunyan in the loftiness of his view of the majesty of the law as the expression of the holiness of God.

The rigour of the law of God is one of Bunyan's fundamental doctrines as may be proved by many quotations. "If<sup>2</sup> a man do fulfil nine of the commandments and yet breaketh but one, that being broken will as surely destroy him and shut him out from the joys of heaven as if he had actually transgressed against them all; for indeed, in effect, so he hath." The law is a unity - to break the vase at one point is to mar and break the whole structure. Moreover, sins of thought are included within the scope of /

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1. Pilgrim's Progress p. 33.  
2. Of for Vol. I. p. 501.

of God's law. No human life approaches blamelessness, but even were such a phenomenon conceivable, a single sin, at its close, would ensure condemnation. "Though a man do<sup>1</sup> walk up to the law all his lifetime, but only at the very last sin one time before he die, he is sure to perish for ever, dying under that covenant". Repentance cannot "stop<sup>2</sup> the mouth of the law". Strict justice is wholly incompatible with mercy. In "The Law and Grace Unfolded" Bunyan employs the forensic illustration of a prisoner who has been found guilty of a capital crime. He casts himself upon the judge's mercy; he earnestly promises future amendment. But the judge rejects these pleas as irrelevant. The law must take its course. Whatever may be said of human law, Divine law requires nothing short of full satisfaction. "The law of God is of this nature that if a man be found under it, and a transgressor, or one that hath transgressed against it, before that prisoner can be released there must be full and complete satisfaction given to it, either by the man's own life, or by the blood of some other man; for 'without shedding of blood' there is no remission". God's broken law calls for blood. Future amendment even though the past offender should /

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1. Offor. Vol. I p. 501.

2. Ibid. p. 220.

should walk in time to come as "an angel<sup>1</sup> of God" and "fulfil the whole law", does not avail to cancel the past. In God's sight to "live down" a transgression by subsequent reformation is impossible. This is exactly the doctrine of Toplady's classic hymn:-

"Could my zeal no respite know

Could my tears for ever flow

All for sin could not atone"

"The justice of God may be compared to fire; ... if thou do keep out of it, it is fire; if thou do fall into it, thou wilt find it fire". Justice is merciless in its very nature. "For justice<sup>2</sup> once offended knoweth not how to show any pity or compassion to the offender, but runs on him like a lion, takes him by the throat, throws him into prison, and there he is sure to lie, and that to all eternity, unless infinite satisfaction be given to it, which is impossible to be given by any of us, the sons of Adam". More than once<sup>3</sup> Bunyan compares the ten commandments to ten "huge pieces of ordnance" discharging themselves upon the hapless sinner.

Satisfaction to the law, though impossible to be rendered /

1. Ibid. p. 503.

2. Ibid. p. 504.

3. Offor. Vol. I. 501; III. 703.

rendered by any mere man, is yet demanded of all who are "under the law" or, in other words, under the covenant of works. 'These latter Bunyan divides into two classes the first including manifest offenders, whether of the gross or more refined order, and the second including those who "follow"<sup>1</sup> after the law as hard as they can, seeking justification thereby". "Friend, you must not understand that none but profane persons are under the law; no, but you must understand that a man may be turned from a vain, loose, open, profane conversation and sinning against the law, to a holy, righteous, religious life, and yet be in the same state, under the same law, and as sure to be damned as the other that "are more profane and loose". "And"<sup>2</sup>, if the principle be rotten, all will fall, all will come to nothing. Now the (true) principle is this - not to do things because we would be saved, but to do them from this, namely because we do really believe that we are and shall be saved. But do not mistake me; I do not say we should slight any holy duties; God forbid; but I say, he that doth look for life because he doth do good duties, he is under the covenant of works, the law; let his duties be /

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1. Offer. Vol. I p. 508-9.  
 2. Ibid. p. 516.

be never so eminent, so often, so fervent, so zealous".

The legalistic and the evangelical spirits are clearly and sharply contrasted in the following quotation:- "That<sup>1</sup> man that doth take up any of the ordinances of God - namely as prayer, baptism, breaking of bread, reading, hearing, alms-deeds, or the like: I say, he that doth practise any of these, or such like, supposing thereby to procure the love of Christ to his own soul, he doth what he doth from a legal, and not from an evangelical or gospel spirit: as thus, - for a man to suppose that God will hear him for his prayers' sake, for his alms' sake, for his humiliation sake, or because he hath promised to make God amends hereafter, whereas there is no such thing as satisfaction to be made to God by our prayers, or whatever we can do; I say, there is no such way to have reconciliation with God in". Bunyan, like Luther, insists on man's insolvency in view of the claims of the law. "If<sup>2</sup> thou be under this covenant, work as hard as thou canst, the law will never say, 'well done'; never say, 'my good servant'; no; but always it will be driving of thee faster, hastening of thee harder, giving of thee fresh commands, which thou must do, and upon pain of damnation not to be left undone. Nay, it is such a /

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1. Ibid. p. 516.

2. Ibid. p. 506.

a master that will curse thee, not only for thy sins, but also because thy good works were not so well done as they ought to be" ... "They<sup>1</sup> that are under the law are in a sad condition, because they do not know whether ever they shall have any wages for their work or no; they have no assurance of the pardon of their sins, neither any hopes of eternal life; but poor hearts as they are, they work for they do not know what, even like a poor horse that works hard all day, and at night hath a dirty stable for his pains; ... the law, if thou sinnest, it doth not take notice of any good work done by thee, but takes its advantage to destroy and cut off thy soul for the sin thou hast committed".

Yet the demands of the law, according to Bunyan, are not arbitrary and tyrannical. "Man<sup>2</sup> at the first had in Adam strength to stand, if he would have used it", but, for us, weakened by Adam's sin, "the law doth command impossible things". There is no vindictiveness in the law; from its very nature of strict and impartial justice, it cannot operate otherwise than it does. "Not<sup>3</sup> because the law hath an evil end in it, but because of our weakness and inability /

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1. Ibid. p. 506.

2. Offor Vol. I. p. 506.

3. Ibid. p. 191.



inability to do it; therefore, it is forced, as it is just, to pass sentence of condemnation on every one that, in every particular, fulfils it not". We have no ground of complaint against the law which is perfectly just, righteous and holy. "Nor<sup>1</sup> can the soul justly murmur or repine at God or at His law for that the sharply apprehensive soul will well discern the justice, righteousness, reasonableness, and goodness of the law, and that nothing is done by the law unto it but that which is just and equal".

We have now cleared the way for an estimate of the function of the law. One thing at least has been made evident: it is vain for man to look to the law for justification. To do<sup>2</sup> so is to misconceive it and to make of it an improper use. It is hopeless for man to expect, by his own efforts, to win the law's certificate of approval. To attempt to do so is to fall either into blind and baseless self-righteousness or into abject despair. Somehow, the law must be satisfied, but this cannot be done by man's own endeavours. Still, the law, so far as man's salvation is concerned, is by no means to be written down as a failure. There yet remain certain wholesome and indeed necessary uses which /

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1. Ibid p. 150.

2. Ibid. p. 367-8.

which it should serve. These may be considered to be three in number. First, it reveals; secondly, it condemns; and thirdly, it compels the soul to take refuge in the Gospel.

The first point has already been discussed under the topic of the law as a mirror. "Sin<sup>1</sup> seen in the glass of the law is a terrible thing, no man can behold it and live". The law is a standard by which human character is measured. It is an ideal set up for our attainment. It weighs man in its balances and finds him wanting. Having revealed, it proceeds to judge, and judgment issues in condemnation.

Bunyan has much that is forceful to say on the condemning function or "killing"<sup>2</sup> power of the law. "That<sup>3</sup> (the moral law or ten commandments) ... is properly the ministration of condemnation (2 Cor. III. 6-11). That is, the proper work of the moral law or ten commandments is to condemn, if it be not obeyed; and yet not to bless until it be every jot fulfilled, which is impossible to be done by any man for justification in that exact and severe way which the law calls for." The law's "proper work is only by showing the soul its sin against this law, to kill, and there /

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1. Offor. Vol. II. p. 261.

2. Offor. Vol. III p. 719.

3. Offor. Vol. I. p. 190.

there leaves him stark dead, not giving him the least life, or support, or comfort, but leaves the soul in a helpless and hopeless condition, as from itself, or any other mere creature". The law convicts of sin in no merely vague or general fashion; its work is particular and individualizing. It laid<sup>1</sup> bare the special sins of Adam, David and the persecutor, Saul. "It findeth out, it singleth out the sinner; the sinner finds it so; it finds out the sins of the sinner; it unravels his whole life, it strips him and lays him naked in his own sight before the face of God."

Conviction of sin is necessary - not as an end in itself, otherwise the outcome would be despair - but as an indispensable preliminary to the acceptance of the gospel. "The<sup>2</sup> law", says Bunyan, "is a servant both first and last to the gospel." We owe a debt of gratitude to its painful, but essential discipline. "There<sup>3</sup> must be found conviction for sin upon the spirit .. Now to convince the soul of sin, the law must be set home upon the conscience by the Spirit of God; for by the<sup>Law</sup> is the knowledge of sin. (Rom. III: 20)". "When<sup>4</sup> God brings sinners into /

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- 1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 694.
  - 2. Offor. Vol. II. p. 28.
  - 3. Offor. II. 261.
  - 4. Offor. Vol. I. 541.

into the covenant of grace, He doth first kill them with the covenant of works which is the moral law or ten commandments". ... "And<sup>1</sup> indeed God is fain to take this way with sinners thus to kill them with the old covenant to all things below a crucified Christ".

... "So<sup>2</sup> long as sinners can make a life out of anything below Christ, so long they will not close with Christ without indenting; but when the God of heaven hath killed them to everything below Himself and His Son, then Christ will down on any terms in the world". "None<sup>3</sup> flies to this righteousness (i.e. the righteousness of Christ) for life but those who feel the sentence of condemnation of God's law upon their conscience, and that in that extremity have sought for righteousness first elsewhere but cannot find it in all the world". The awakened sinner, Bunyan goes on to say, first seeks to find salvation by obedience to the law. "But being wearied out of this, and if God loves him he will weary him out of it, then he looks unto heaven and cries to God for righteousness; the which God shows him in His own good time he hath reckoned to him, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Now by this very discovery /

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1. Ibid p. 543.

2. Offor. Vol. I. p. 543.

3. Offor. Vol I. p. 766.

discovery the heart is also principled with the spirit of the gospel; for the spirit comes with the gospel down from heaven to such an one and fills his soul with good; by which he is capacitated to bring forth fruit, true fruit, which are the fruits of righteousness imputed, and of righteousness infused, to the glory and praise of God". The broom<sup>1</sup> of the law reveals and raises the dust of pollution in the heart of man, and this necessitates the sprinkling of the cleansing water of the Gospel.

Bunyan admits that it is a difficult task to assign to each of the two covenants its proper place. He knows that the Christian teacher must steer his course between the Scylla of legalism and the Charybdis of antinomianism. "I must<sup>2</sup> confess", he says, "it is a mysterious thing, and he had need have a wiser spirit than his own, that can rightly set these two covenants in their right places, that when he speaks of the one he doth not jostle the other out of its place". The law and the gospel have each of them its own work to do in the soul of man. "He<sup>3</sup> that is dark as touching the scope, intent and nature of the law, is also dark as to the scope, nature and glory of the gospel"./

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1. Pilgrim's Progress pp. 40-41.
  2. Offor. Vol. I. p. 495.
  3. Ibid. pp. 493-4.

gospel". ... I say, therefore, if thou wouldst know the authority and power of the gospel, labour first to know the power and authority of the law". The law is a necessary preliminary to the gospel, but that is not all. Though the Christian does not base his hope of salvation on the law, he is not free to turn his liberty into licentiousness. After conversion his life is not less but more moral than before. The law, though not the arbiter of salvation, is still a valid standard of outward conduct and even of inward thought. Luther<sup>1</sup> thus assigns its sphere to the law in the converted Christian's life:-

"Wherefore we will not be burdened with any law of Moses. We grant that he is to be read among us, and to be heard as a Prophet and a witness-bearer of Christ: and moreover that out of him we may take good examples of good laws and holy manners. But we will not suffer him in any wise to have dominion over our conscience. In this case let him be dead and buried, and let no man know where his grave is". Bunyan corroborates and sanctions the teaching of these words in the following passage:- ... "not<sup>2</sup> suffering the law to rule but over my outward man, not suffering the gospel to be removed one hair's breadth from my conscience /

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1. Galatians p. 228.  
 2. Offor. Vol. II. 29.

conscience. When Christ dwells in my heart by faith (Eph. III. 17), and the moral law dwells in my members (Col. III: 5.), the one to keep up peace with God, the other to keep my conversation in a good decorum: then am I right, and not till then ... For there is nothing that Satan more desireth than that the law may abide in the conscience of an awakened Christian, and there take up the place of Christ and faith: for he knows if this may be obtained, the veil is presently drawn over the face of the soul, and the heart darkened as to the knowledge of Christ; and being darkened, the man is driven into despair of mercy or is put upon it to work for life" (2 Cor. III: 13-15). In "The Saints' Privilege and Profit", or "The Throne of Grace", a treatise on Heb. IV: 16, Bunyan with his characteristic flair for symbolism, sees a certain deep significance in the structure of the Ark of the Testimony. His interpretation is a happy illustration of his view of the relative positions of Law and Gospel, with which we may fittingly close this section of our topic. He points out that the mercy seat is above the ark, "signifying<sup>1</sup> that Grace sits upon a throne, higher than the law, above the law "

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1. Ofor. Vol. I. p. 647.

law ... a throne which the law, instead of accusing, justifieth and approveth." At the same time the two tables of the law, which "comdemn all flesh", have a place "nigh to the mercy seat" and within the ark. They are kept before us as even when we face the throne of Grace. "So then here is a memento for them that come to God, and to His throne of grace, for mercy, to wit, the law, by which they are afresh put in remembrance of themselves, their sins, and what need they have of fresh supplies of grace".



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SECTION B. (3).

## (3) The Source of Sin.

We have seen that Bunyan on the whole identifies himself with the Reformed description or definition of sin as want of conformity to the law of God. For practical purposes as a working hypothesis this theory is at least as acceptable as any other, and more acceptable than most. But it makes no pronouncement upon the deeper question of the origin of sin. This want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God - whence does it arise? How has this phenomenon become possible? What factor has produced it, or what combination of factors has co-operated to produce it? It is not the offspring of the law, for the law is holy and righteous. It is true that, in a certain sense, if there were no law, there would be no sin, but this does not mean that sin is to be ascribed to the law; it only means that the law reveals and even intensifies what was previously in existence. It does not call into being, on the contrary it condemns the monstrosity of sin, and shows it up in its true colours. The law recognises and identifies sin, but, as a causal agency, it has no part nor lot in originating the evil thing.

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In the problem of the origin of evil, Bunyan is much less interested than in the fact itself of sin, whose reality he never doubted. Sin was to him a malady of the soul whose fatal issue could only be averted by prompt steps towards its removal. Its origin was to him of very much less moment than its cure. He was no metaphysician, and had little inclination to probe deeply into the origin of evil. When a drowning man is rescued, it is not the doctor's first duty to ascertain precisely how he happened to fall into the water and to chide him for his fault. Remedial measures in the shape of first aid must be taken at once if the perishing life is to be saved. The fact must first be faced and coped with. Theories as to how it occurred are of secondary importance and may well be left over until the endangered man is placed in a position of safety. Bunyan was primarily concerned with sin as an appalling fact in his own life and in the world - a fact which clamoured for immediate treatment. Hence it happens that, much though he has to say of sin, he discusses its origin but rarely. There are, however, indications in his works that he by no means dismissed the latter topic without careful consideration.

In attempting to discover and state Bunyan's view  
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of the origin of sin we shall follow, as far as possible, the inductive method, arguing from facts to theories rather than seeking to reconcile preconceived theories with hard facts. But it must be remembered that there are two landmarks of doctrine which no alleged facts will ever prevail upon Bunyan to remove. No theory of the origin of sin, however plausible, is acceptable or admissible to him which infringes either the holiness of God or the responsibility of man. It must be distinctly understood that God is in no sense, the author of evil. From any line of thought which tends in that direction Bunyan would have recoiled in horror: he would have rejected it as blasphemous. The responsibility for human sin is man's own. He cannot honestly transfer the blame elsewhere, and it is cowardly to seek to make the vain attempt.

Sin has an ancient history behind it. Its origin is hidden in the region of remote antiquity and dark mystery. It is not open to us to trace the river from its distant source to the sea. We can only begin at the point where it passes our own door, and follow it upstream as far as we may. We make our first acquaintance with sin in our own heart and life. Looking around us, we find it to be characteristic of human nature. Its presence in the world is undeniable, and yet, in a real sense /

sense, indefensible. It is here in us and around us, and yet our consciences protest against it, declaring that it ought not to be. We start our quest for the origin of sin in its actual reality in man.

To what part or organ of man's intricate being did Bunyan conceive sin to be primarily attached? Its poison affects his whole nature, but here the question rather is, which of his faculties admits it into his organism? Which of man's powers is capable of sinning and does actually sin? What is the seat of sin in man? To this Bunyan has no hesitation in answering that while the body may be the instrument of sin, the soul is its instigator, the soul is "the actor"<sup>1</sup>. He declares emphatically that it is the soul that sins. Sin is no mere excrescence appearing only on the outward man; its roots are entwined round the inmost self. "Sin<sup>2</sup> and all spiritual wickedness, they have their seat in the heart and soul of a man, and by their using this or that member of the body, so defile the man". Matter to him was certainly not inherently evil. It was not his view that it was necessary to destroy the body in order to save the soul. He holds that where 'the flesh' is disparaged and condemned in the writings of St. Paul /

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1. Oflor Vol. I p. 133.

2. Oflor. Vol. II. p. 92.

Paul what is meant is not the literal flesh "that<sup>1</sup> hangeth on our bones", not "the nature that God hath made" but "the weakness which cleaveth to it". So far as sin is concerned, the human body is not the fons et origo mali.

Bunyan admits, however, that this latter statement requires qualification. As an empirical fact in human nature as we know it, sin cannot be dissociated from the body. It is not merely that the sin, resident in the soul, takes up the body and uses it as its instrument. There is, or there has come to be, a closer connection than that, between sin and the body. Of the two great classes of sin - actual and original - Bunyan maintains that the latter comes to us through the body. To the question - whence does the soul receive sin? Bunyan replies as follows:- "I<sup>2</sup> answer, from the body, while it is in the mother's belly ... The soul comes from God's hand, and therefore as so is pure and clean; but being put into the body, it is tainted, polluted, and defiled with the taint, stench and filth of sin". Bunyan does not make use of the technical terms, Creationism<sup>3</sup> and Traducianism, as applied to opposing theories of the origin of the soul. But the passage we have quoted proves that he was cognisant of the content /

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1. Offor. Vol. II. p. 92.

2. Offor. Vol. I. p. 127.

3. Cf. Hodge. Vol. II. pp. 68-70.

content of these theories. From it we infer that he adheres to the generally accepted Reformed position of Creationism while prepared to do justice to the element of truth contained in Traducianism. While declaring that each individual soul is God's creation, he is fully alive to the early emergence of the hereditary taint, which, he asserts, the body brings with it into the composite nature of man. God, of course, is the Creator of body as well as of soul, and in the case of Adam the body was free from hereditary taint, but this does not apply to any of his ordinary descendants. Original sin in us is to be traced back to actual sin in Adam. All the sin in existence in the world is thus fundamentally and by origin actual. Since the Fall, "every soul<sup>1</sup> comes into the world as poisoned by sin". If it is asked "how<sup>2</sup> a soul, before it was a month old, could receive sin to the making of itself unclean? I answer, there are two ways of receiving, one active, the other passive; the last is the way by which the soul at first receiveth sin, and by so receiving, becometh culpable, because polluted and defiled by it." The soul, he asserts, receives sin as wool receives a dye. The following metaphor is even more thorough /

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1. Offor Vol. I. p. 127.

2. Offor Vol. I. p. 126.

thorough-going and drastic:- "The serpent<sup>1</sup> has not her poison in the original of it, either from imitation, or from other infective things abroad, though it may be by such things helped forward and increased; but she brings it with her in her bowels, in her nature, and it is to her as suitable to her present condition as is that which is most sweet and wholesome to other of the creatures". It may be difficult to see how all this is to be reconciled with full individual responsibility. But Bunyan, as we note from the fore-going, decidedly applies the adjective, 'culpable' to original sin. The soul may receive sin passively, but "it<sup>2</sup> retains it willingly", "it willingly, heartily, unanimously, universally falleth in with the natural filth and pollution that is in sin." Though every soul at its creation is sinless, yet when united with the body it betrays a bias towards evil, "sin<sup>3</sup> has a friendly entertainment by the soul, and therefor the soul is guilty of damnation".

Our quest after the origin of sin is now narrowed down to an examination of the nature of actual sin, the latter having the priority over what is known as original sin. /

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1. *ibid.* p. 127  
 2. " " "  
 3. *ibid.* p. 129.



sin. Original sin is a spiritual state of sinfulness; actual sins are isolated transgressions considered by themselves. The habit and its more developed stage, the character, are the product of accumulated acts. A study of the deliberate act will thus bring us nearer to the origin of the mischief. The essential character of sin in all spiritual beings, whether angels or men, is one and the same. The historical origin of sin may be traced back to the Fall of Adam or even to the Fall of the Angels, but the most modern actual transgression exhibits the same fundamental features as the primeval deed of sin, wherever or by whomsoever committed. The natural history of actual sin was the same for Adam as it is for us. Psychology applied to our own human nature will aid us in the search for the origin of sin at least as much as antiquarian investigation. Bunyan makes no pretension to psychological skill, but he presents us in one of his treatises with what we may call a natural history of sin which bears the marks of close observation, and which, so far as it goes, carries conviction. He thus describes the genesis and growth of sin in the soul:- "There<sup>1</sup> is then a motion of /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 129.

of sin presented to the soul (whether presented by sin itself, or the devil we will not at this time dispute); motions of sin, and motions to sin there are, and always the end of the motions of sin are to prevail with the soul to help that motion into an act. But I say there is a motion to sin moved to the soul, or as James calls it, a conception. This motion is taken notice of by the soul, but is not resisted nor striven against, only the soul lifts up its eyes upon it, and sees that there is present a motion to sin, a motion of sin, presented to the soul that the soul might midwife it from conception into the world". Then "the fancy or imagination of the soul taketh it home to it". The motion is not cast out but cherished and fondled "to the firing and inflaming all the powers of the soul". Then follows "the purpose to pursue this motion". Next "the invention is diligently set to work" to discover ways and means to translate the thought into deed, and finally the overt action of sin is performed. It is interesting to place alongside the above passage the locus classicus from Thomas à Kempis<sup>1</sup> "For first there cometh to the mind a bare thought of evil, then a strong imagination thereof, afterwards delight and /

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1. Imitation of Christ Bk. I. Chap. XIII.

and an evil motion and then consent". The two great minds of à Kempis and Bunyan, though they may not have been brought into contact, thought alike on this great topic, and their descriptions are true to life. It may be asked, at which point in this succession of stages does guilt first emerge? The first stage, at least, is compatible with blamelessness. There is no sin in being tempted. The suggestion, the "bare thought" of evil casts no stain of guilt upon the soul to which it is presented. The first germs of actual sin are sown in the soul when the imagination is permitted to take pleasure in the contemplated evil. So long, however, as the struggle against temptation is maintained, there is at least comparative immunity from guilt. Sin is unequivocally committed at the moment when choice is made in its favour and the purpose of evil is definitely formed. The moment of actual sin is the moment of "consent".

We have progressed far enough to warrant the conclusion that sin is essentially and originally a spiritual phenomenon. The lower animals are incapable of sinning, and that was why Bunyan, in some moments of depression, was fain, as he tells us in "Grace Abounding" to change places with them. It is with the spiritual side of his nature /

nature that man sins. "The corruption of the best is the worst", and sin is a corruption to which only the most highly gifted of created beings are liable. Our greatest glory and privilege, as free and rational beings, constitutes our greatest danger. It is doubtful whether Bunyan was aware of the tripartite division of man's psychological nature into intellect, feeling and will. But it is interesting to ask, to which of these three factors or aspects he would have assigned the primacy in transgression. The least likely of the three is the first. He would scarcely have agreed with Socrates that ignorance is the root of evil, although he is unsparing in his treatment of the "very brisk lad" whose name was Ignorance<sup>1</sup>, and although he held that enlightenment is necessary to salvation. In "The Life and Death of Mr. Badman" we find the following:- "The heart<sup>2</sup> and the desperate wickedness of it, is the foundation and groundwork of all". But this does not locate the origin of sin in the emotions; it merely amounts to a strong assertion of the inwardness of sin, as rooted in the spiritual nature of man in general. In his catechetical "Instruction /

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1. Pilgrim's Progress. p. 161 sqq.

2. Offor Vol.III p. 627.

"Instruction for the Ignorant" there occur the following question<sup>1</sup> and answer "Q. 'Is my heart then the fountain and original of sin?' A. 'Yes'- upon which follows as proof-text Mark VII 21- 23. The term 'heart' is here undoubtedly of wide application, comprising the whole inner man but its special reference would appear to be less to the intellectual than to the emotional side of human psychology. Closely akin to the emotional is the volitional element in man, and Bunyan brackets the two together in the following sentence:- "the devil,<sup>2</sup> he doth what he can to possess the wills and affections of those that are his, with love to sin". The feelings furnish the motives which set the executive function in motion, but after all it is the will that gives the casting vote when the feelings are divided. It is the will that makes choice. It is the will that commits sin. This theory is the best safe-guard in this matter, both of the responsibility of man and of the holiness of God. Bunyan awards full recognition to the pre-eminent position of the will in human nature. Lord Will-be-will<sup>3</sup> "was as high-born as any man in Mansoul, and was as much if not more a freeholder than many of them were: /

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1. Offor. Vol. II p. 681.

2. Offor. Vol. III p. 389.

3. Offor. Vol. III p. 262.

were: besides, if I remember my tale aright, he had some privilege peculiar to himself in the famous town of Mansoul". The fore-going may be thus divested of its allegorical drapery:- "I tell<sup>1</sup> you the will is all: that is one of the chief things which turns the wheel either backwards or forwards; and God knoweth that full well, and so likewise doth the devil; and therefore they both endeavour very much to strengthen the will of their servants". The Christian is thus exhorted in his race towards heaven:- "Get<sup>2</sup> thy will tipt with the heavenly grace. Bunyan would have found little if anything to quarrel with in the following words of Article XIX of the Augsburg Confession of 1530:- "the<sup>3</sup> cause of sin is the will of the wicked; to wit of the devil and ungodly men". Further back than the "will of the wicked" it is not open to us to trace the origin of sin.

We have been seeking to track sin upwards to its fount in human nature. Sin made its first appearance in humanity when Adam fell. But, according to Bunyan, that was not its earliest emergence in the universe. Sin without mankind antedates the sin within. It is human to err, but it is not exclusively and originally human.

Evil /

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1. Offor Vol. III p. 389.
2. " " " " "
3. Schaff. p. 20.

Evil had gained a footing among certain higher spiritual beings before it secured a place in mankind. Sin in mankind had two parents; it was the offspring of the union of the evil without and the potency of evil within. Sin was brought into our world from another sphere, and its origin must be sought elsewhere than in our earth. Man was not the first spiritual being who was guilty of sin. It was not a monstrosity unheard of until he appeared. The responsibility for the production of evil by no means rests exclusively upon his shoulders. He was guilty of yielding to temptation, but he was not guilty of tempting himself. There were certain malign powers in existence and at work around him from the dawn of his history. With the presence of these in the earth he had nothing to do. For their activity he was in no way answerable. They had already sinned, and they sought - successfully as it proved - to lead mankind into sin. They conceived the nefarious design of seducing, and making a prey of mankind. Some sinister thing, or rather some sinister being or beings, outside of humanity, appealed persuasively and successfully to something within - that is Bunyan's view of the genesis of sin in mankind, and it possesses at least the merit of faithfulness to Scriptural /

Scriptural teaching. Bunyan, as we have seen, is deeply almost uniquely conscious of the evil within, but he is also firmly persuaded of the reality and power of the evil without. Bunyan's doctrine of the origin of sin therefore includes his doctrine of the devil and of the hierarchy and hosts of evil under his direction and domination.

In the Biblical narrative of man's first sin which Bunyan accepts as literally true there is irrefutable evidence of the presence of a tempter external to man. There is a divergence of opinion as to the interpretation of the nature of "the serpent". Hodge who may be taken as spokesman of the orthodox Reformed theology, maintains that "the serpent<sup>1</sup> is neither a figurative designation of Satan, nor did Satan assume the form of a serpent" but that "a real serpent was the agent of the temptation", albeit "Satan was the real tempter and ... used the serpent merely as his organ and instrument". In harmony with this, is the view of modern theological scholarship<sup>2</sup> that "the Serpent who tempts Eve ... is a demon in animal shape" and that "there is no hint that an evil spirit resided in it", in such a fashion as to be detachable from it /

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1. Hodge Vol. II p. 127.

2. Hastings Bible Dictionary Articles, Satan, Demon, Devil.



it and capable of passing into something else. This latter, however, seems to have been Bunyan's interpretation. In his exposition of Genesis III: 1 there occurs the following:-<sup>1</sup> Satan "here tempts by means; he appeareth not in his own shape and hue, but assumeth the body of one of the creatures, the body of the serpent, and so begins the combat". Further on in his elucidation of the same chapter he declares that "the serpent"<sup>2</sup> was assumed by the fallen angels", but "the serpent was become the devil's vizor". "The serpent", according to him, was apparently either Satan himself or one of the fallen angels in temporary disguise, the other view being that this particular serpent, so long as it existed, was the permanent and not the passing habitation of an evil spirit. Bunyan held that Satan may assume at pleasure different animal forms. "Sin"<sup>3</sup> can make one who was sometimes a glorious angel in heaven now so to abuse himself as to become, to appearance, as a filthy frog, a toad, a rat, a cat, a fly, a mouse, a dog, or a bitch's whelp, to serve its ends upon a poor mortal". Whether, however, "the serpent" was essentially a demon, or only temporarily inhabited by a demon, does not appear to affect /

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1. Offor. Vol. II. p. 428.

2. Ibid. p. 436.

3. Offor Vol. I p. 683.

affect the main point at issue. On either hypothesis "the serpent" was doing the devil's work. The evil without first presented itself to man through the agency of the devil acting by himself or through one of his underlings. He brought with him and sowed the noxious seed, which unhappily fell into congenial soil. Our first parents had no original sin but they "first received it in the suggestion or motion (as presented by Satan) and then acted it".

What then is Bunyan's doctrine of the devil which we may expect to include in large measure his view of sin as an entity outside of man? There is no lack of material throughout the pages of his works; an index would disclose a host of references to the devil. But whether these yield a consistent and clear-cut theory of this mysterious agent or agency is open to doubt. At least it is manifest that, in harmony with the popular thought of his time, he held a much stronger conviction of the personality of the Evil One than the average Christian of our day. It is in no poetical or figurative sense that he attributes personality to him whom he regards as the embodiment of all that is opposed to God. Evil is to him no mere blind and unintelligent force. It is directed by, and in large measure /

measure identified with a mind of superhuman strength and craft. Bunyan had an ever-present conviction that in the devil every Christian is face to face with a personal antagonist whose mighty power and eminent skill constantly seek to compass the ruin of man. When we take it upon ourselves to offer resistance to sin, we are not opposing a power like unto the inclement elements of inanimate nature; we are measuring ourselves against a mind of implacable hostility whose abilities and resources far transcend our own. With the waning of belief in a personal devil our Salutory sense of the dangers involved in living also suffers inevitable diminution.

In "The Holy War"<sup>1</sup> Bunyan presents us with an elaborate account in allegorical form of the activities of the devil directed against mankind, near the outset of which we find a short biographical sketch which purports to set forth his origin, fall and subsequent history down to date. "This Diabolus is indeed a great and mighty prince, and yet both poor and beggarly. As to his original, he was at first one of the servants of King Shaddai, made and taken and put by him into most high and mighty place, yea, was put into such principalities as belonged to the best of /

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1. Offor. Vol. III. p. 256.

of His territories and dominions". The devil was, so to speak, not always a devil. The chief of the angels of darkness was, in his origin, when created by God, an angel of light. Moreover, he came to be advanced to a most eminent place in the hierarchy of heaven. There is as yet no trace of sin anywhere in the boundless universe of God. There was a time when Good reigned everywhere, undisputed. There was a time when sin was not. Though Bunyan assigns tremendous potency and vast antiquity to evil, he avoids the pitfall of dualism. Diabolus, though high in rank, never shared the throne of the Eternal. His Fall indeed was due to his unwarranted and unsuccessful attempt in that direction.

The earliest and first of sinners then was the devil himself. "What<sup>1</sup> a devil then is sin? it is the worst of devils; it is worse than all devils; those that are devils sin hath made them so; nor could anything else have made them devils but sin .. Now, I pray ... What is it to be a devil, but to be under for ever the power and dominion of sin, an implacable spirit against God". There was a Fall of Angels before the Fall of Man, and the latter was propagated by the former. Sin first appeared /

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1. Offor Vol. I. p. 682.

appeared in the "Luciferian<sup>1</sup> heart" of Diabolus in the shape of insatiable ambition, overweening pride, and bitter envy - all of them, be it noted, spiritual sins. Such is the essence of Bunyan's pictorial representation of the nature of the devil's primeval sin; it conforms to "the general opinion<sup>2</sup> that it was pride, founded on I Tim. III: 6", for ambition and envy are not far removed from pride. The devil, Bunyan goes on to indicate, communicated his sinful and treasonable thought to certain of his associates among the angels who received it sympathetically. A plot was formed to give outward effect to the rebellion within. All this, however, could not escape the all-seeing Eye of the Eternal. The rebels were brought to justice and banished to hell. This augmented their malice and rage, and they thenceforward employed whatever power and freedom were left them in wreaking their revenge against God and all His belongings. Man, as the child of God, was the peculiar object of their hostility. The devil's temptation of man was prompted by his desire to shatter God's handiwork wherein He specially delighted, and to drag the souls of God's children down to hell, the abode of the lost /

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1. Offor. Vol. III p. 256.

2. Hodge. Vol. I. p. 643.

lost, there to share to all eternity the fellowship of abandoned spirits in torments unutterable.

The Fall of our first parents was the only too successful outcome of the devil's first, but by no means last, attempt upon man's happiness and salvation. Since the days of Eden, according to Bunyan, he has never ceased to ply his truly diabolical task with unremitting energy and not infrequent success. He is "by<sup>1</sup> way of eminency called the enemy of God's people", and this he is because he is essentially the enemy of God. Inveterate hostility to God and goodness is his constant inspiration and unfailing motive. He is determined to inflict all possible damage upon God and all that is God's; towards that end his formidable and tremendous powers are ever directed and devoted.

The points indicated in the previous paragraph may be copiously illustrated from Bunyan's works. The phenomenal "industry" and activity of the devil are graphically depicted in the following from "The Heavenly Footman":-  
 "I can<sup>2</sup> assure you the devil is nimble, he can run apace, he is light of foot, he hath overtaken many, he hath turned up their heels and given them an everlasting fall.. There is never a poor soul that is going to heaven but the devil /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 602.

2. Offor. Vol. III p. 382.

devil, the law, sin, death and hell make after that soul".

The purpose towards which his powers and energies are directed is thus clearly and vigorously stated:- "It<sup>1</sup> is the soul he aims at ... Beware, Christian ... the devil is desirous to have thee. Nothing will serve him but the Kingdom ... men when they persecute are for the stuff, but the devil is for the soul". "The devil<sup>2</sup> who is the great enemy of the Christians, can send forth such spirits into the world as shall not only disturb men but nations, Kings and Kingdoms, in raising divisions, distractions and rebellions". "God has<sup>3</sup> suffered them (evil spirits) for a time to take to themselves principality and powers, and so they are become the rulers of the darkness of this world. By these we are tempted, sifted, threatened, oppressed, undermined; also by these there are snares, pits, holes and what not laid for us, if peradventure by something we may be destroyed".

The devil's rancour against God and the children of God is implacable and unappeasable. "He<sup>4</sup> is full of fire against us, full of the fire of malice". This, Bunyan maintains, is amply testified by the record of history and is /

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3. Offor Vol. II p. 696.

2. Ibid. p. 705.

3. Offor Vol. II. p. 8.

4. Offor. Vol. I p. 236.

is proved not only by his attempt on our first parents but also by his assaults on Christ from His infancy, and by the manifold and unceasing trials and persecutions of the Church. Christ's intercession for us at God's right hand is necessary for this among other reasons because "his<sup>1</sup> (the devil's) boldness will try what it can do with God, either to tempt Him to reject the Son's mediation or to reject them that come to God by Him for mercy". He actually would "aspire<sup>2</sup> up into the presence of God to accuse any of the poor saints and to plead their backslidings against them". He is well-named Diabolus, Accuser, Slanderer because he pursues God's children with his accusations to the uttermost, and he will never be silenced so long as he can lift up his voice.

Any weapon will serve him which may promote directly or indirectly the nefarious purpose to which he ever clings. He is a past master in suiting means to the great end he has in view. "For<sup>3</sup> as Satan can tell how to suit temptations for thee in the day of thy want, so he has those that can entangle thee in the day of thy fulness". His unscrupulous craft, cunning and astuteness are unexcelled. His skill /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 236.
  2. Ibid. p. 532.
  3. Offor. Vol. I. p. 677.



skill in adapting the temptation to the nature and circumstances of his intended victim is unequalled. He can make the worse appear the better reason. He is quick to see, and take advantage of, any circumstance that may tell in his favour. He is an arguer of the utmost resource and of the most insinuating persuasiveness. Christian's argument<sup>1</sup> with Apollyon is an admirable illustration of Bunyan's conception of the Tempter's consummate skill. The enemy seeks to throw dust in the pilgrim's eyes. When foiled at one point he rapidly shifts his ground and directs his attack from another. Any weakness in his opponent's armour he immediately detects and aims his assault at the vulnerable point. He is "the intercessor"<sup>2</sup> between the soul and sin and though the breach between these two may seem to be irreconcilable ... yet he can tell how to make up the difference".

He leaves no stone unturned to accomplish his design. His evil cause loses nothing in his hands. The temptations he presents are varied and even mutually opposed and destructive, but he always selects that which is most likely to appeal to and to entrap his intended victim. His /

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1. Pilgrim's Progress p. 75 sqq.

2. Offor. Vol. II. p. 533.

His wiles, Bunyan would maintain, are obviously the work of a scheming mind of colossal power. It is impossible to conceive of them as the product of chance. They bear the stamp of the malicious purpose of a sinister personality. They show unmistakable evidence of design and thought. Bunyan presented no argument for the personality of the head of the hosts of evil; he regarded it as self-evident. He was amazed at the subtilty and variety of the forms in which temptation clothes itself. The devil scruples not to quote Scripture to suit his purpose. He is fond of disguising<sup>1</sup> himself as an angel of light, and only a keen eye can detect the dark skin beneath the white vesture. There are some<sup>2</sup> whom he secures by the snare of carelessness and unwarranted assurance. There are others who fall a prey to despair. There are some who are caught in the noose of self-righteousness. There are others who fall headlong into antinomianism and libertinism. There are some who suffer deception as to the nature of true faith and its fruits. There are others who are beguiled by the doctrine of "the higher light" and who reject the gospel as "odious and low". There is no conceivable heresy nor delusion /

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1. Pilgrim's Progress p. 173.
  2. Offor. Vol. II. p. 132.

delusion which Satan does not employ to lead the simple astray. Election Doubters and Vocation Doubters are enlisted in the armies of Diabolus in his assaults against Mansoul. "There<sup>1</sup> are two things among many that Satan uses to roar out upon them that are coming to Jesus Christ (1) That they are not elected or (2) that they have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost".

In Bunyan's opinion - the product, no doubt, of his own trying experience - one of the devil's characteristic and most poisonous temptations is "pouring<sup>2</sup> into our hearts abundance of horrid blasphemies". To this particular snare of the devil he makes repeated allusion. The locus classicus is in "The Pilgrim's<sup>3</sup> Progress" where this surpassingly noisome and odious assault of the Tempter is thus described as taking place while Christian was passing through the Valley of the Shadow of Death:- "Just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him and stepped up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind. This put Christian more to it than anything he had met /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 284,
  2. Offor. Vol. I. p. 456.
  3. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 84.

met before, even to think that he should now blaspheme Him that he had loved so much before: yet if he could have helped it, he would not have done it; but he had not the discretion either to stop his ears or to know whence these blasphemies came". Bunyan's explanatory marginal note at this point should also be quoted. "Christian made believe that he spake blasphemies when it was Satan that suggested them to his mind." To the Christian sorely tried in this direction as Bunyan frequently was, there is, strange though it may appear, an element of comfort in the belief in the personal agency of Satan. There is great relief in the knowledge that we ourselves are not directly responsible for these "horrid blasphemies" but that they are "suddenly<sup>1</sup> injected by the devil". This conviction Bunyan held and it tended to restore his peace of mind when ~~grit~~<sup>grief</sup> ~~v~~iously perturbed. It actually made for strength and sanity. To be able to father an evil thought upon the devil and not upon ourselves even upon our lower self or our subliminal consciousness is for a conscientious Christian to escape the most deadly element in its sting. It is a great deliverance to be able in such a case truthfully to disclaim responsibility, and it is one of the practical /

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practical advantages of Bunyan's doctrine of the devil that it offers such a solution. To make the devil and the lower self synonymous terms, as modern thought tends to do, would appear to be a less efficacious and unambiguous mode of getting rid of a responsibility which might well prove intolerable. For the evil which assails us definitely from without we at least escape primary responsibility, and Bunyan frequently asserts that the evil thoughts within us are in many cases generated by the Evil One. "How many<sup>1</sup> strange, hideous and amazing blasphemies have those, some of those that are coming to Christ had injected and fixed upon their spirits against Him [by Satan and his angels]. Nothing so common to such as to have some hellish wish or other against God they are coming to and against Christ by whom they would come to Him. These blasphemies are like these frogs that I have heard of, that will leap up, and catch hold of, and hang by their claws." The devil places every possible stumbling block in the way of those that are coming to Christ. He "has"<sup>2</sup> the art of making the uttermost of every sin; he can blow it up, make it swell, make every hair of its head as big /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 210.

2. Offor. Vol. I. p. 210.

big as a cedar. He can tell how to make it a heinous offence, an unpardonable offence, an offence of that continuance and committed against so much light, that, says he, it is impossible it should ever be forgiven". "How<sup>1</sup> doth he haunt the spirits of the Christians with blasphemies and troubles, with darkness and frightful fears: sometimes to their destruction and often to the filling of the Church with outcries". He tempts to doubt and despair.<sup>2</sup> He seeks<sup>3</sup> in every possible manner to overthrow the Christian's faith and to remove his hope.

In the love of Christ Satan recognises his mightiest foe. His utmost, his despairing efforts are accordingly put forth in order to obscure that love. "There<sup>4</sup> is nothing that Satan setteth himself more against, than the breaking forth of the love of Christ in its own native lustre. For he knows it destroys his kingdom, which standeth in profaneness, in errors and delusions, the only destruction of which is in the knowledge of this love of Christ (2 Cor. V: 14). What mean those swarms of opinions that are in the world? What is the reason that some are carried about as clouds, with a tempest? What mean men's waverings, men's changing, and interchanging truth for error /

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1. Ibid. p. 236.
  2. Ibid. p. 236.
  3. Ibid. p. 581.
  4. Ofor. Vol. II. p. 27.

error, and one error for another? why, this is the thing the devil is in it. This work is his, and he makes this a-do, to make a dust; and a dust to darken the light of the gospel withal. And if he once attaineth to that, then farewell the true knowledge of the love of Christ".

To the agency of the devil, direct or indirect, Bunyan traces all human sin in regenerate and unregenerate alike. The following passage may indeed seem to give colour to the idea that sin exists in the world apart from Satan's origination:- "These<sup>1</sup> things (evil thoughts) are either suddenly injected by the devil, or else are the fruits of that body of sin and death that yet dwells within thee, or perhaps from both together". But then "the body of sin and death" is in other words original sin which at first was the actual sin committed in Eden and there instigated by the Tempter. Our lusts may operate without the direct intervention of the devil but even so they are the fruit of his planting in our race in ages gone by. He acts upon us both by direct suggestion and by the indirect agency of indwelling sin. Upon our Lord who had no indwelling sin he made, in the days of His flesh, direct but entirely unsuccessful assault.<sup>2</sup>

Bunyan /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 251.  
2, Offor. Vol. III p. 426.

Bunyan, like Luther, had, as we have seen, a vivid sense of the personal existence of the devil, as the following quotation from "Grace Abounding" explicitly proves:- "Sometimes<sup>1</sup> I have thought I should see the devil, nay thought I have felt him behind me pull my clothes; he would also be continually at me in the time of prayer to have done". Yet neither Bunyan nor Luther approached dualism. Bunyan distinctly recognises the devil's limitations. He is one of those wicked spirits whom "God has<sup>2</sup> suffered for a time to take to themselves principality and power". Above the devil and his legions is the one supreme power of God. The problem of the origin of evil is thus, by no means solved by the orthodox doctrine of the devil; it is only pushed farther back. To say that the devil is the author of evil even as God is the author of good is not admissible as the ultimate solution of the problem, for the devil on the Christian hypothesis is not a "self-existent being but owes his existence" to the Creator of all. God is the First Cause of all things and He gave existence to spiritual beings endowed with the potency of evil but not handicapped by the /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 19.

2. Offor. Vol. II. p. 8.



the necessity of committing sin. To what extent, if any is the author of our being responsible for our sin? This age-long mystery is expressed in the well-known lines from Myers' "St. Paul":-

"Therefore<sup>1</sup> have pity! not that we accuse Thee,  
Curse Thee and die and charge Thee with our woe;  
Not thro' Thy fault, O Holy One, we lose Thee,  
Nay, but our own, - yet Thou hast made us so".

Therein lies the crux:- God made us, and yet for our sin the blame is our own. No Christian will consent to sacrifice either truth, and yet their reconciliation in our present state of knowledge, is hard indeed to effect. The problem of the origin of sin is closely akin to that of the Sovereignty of God and the Freedom of Man. We are confronted by two truths apparently incompatible, neither of which we dare surrender. Modern apologists for sin do not hesitate to throw the responsibility upon such extraneous factors as heredity and environment - which amounts to attributing the fault to the Creator. The individual is acquitted of his own sin which is laid at the door of something outside of the deliberate choice of his /

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1. "St. Paul" by F.W.H. Myers, London. Foulis. p. 10.

his own will. Such a solution is entirely alien to the teaching of Bunyan and indeed of Christianity. It assails the holiness of God and it infringes the responsibility of man. - both of which must be carefully safeguarded. Bunyan's "map"<sup>1</sup> shewing the Order and Causes of Salvation and Damnation" does indeed represent the Line of Grace and the Line of Justice as both proceeding from the Deity. Out of the Line of Justice emerges the Covenant of Works which issues in Reprobation. But it is quite clear that Bunyan would have shuddered in horror if he had thought that this map would have been interpreted as making God the Author of sin. He adheres whole-heartedly to the two fundamental Christian doctrines of the Sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Man, he holds, is responsible for his own sin, and it is just and right that he should bear the blame. He makes no complaint against any alleged injustice on God's part in condemning sin. Man is not the victim of any hardship when he suffers for his sin. The holy God cannot do other than punish the sin of man, so long as no satisfaction or atonement is offered for it. God is the enemy of sin which is entirely repugnant to His holy nature. It is inconceivable not to say blasphemous /

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1. Offor. Vol. III. p. 374.

blasphemous to suggest that He should be in any way responsible for it. Puritanism, as we have seen, insists on the necessity in man of the sense of sin. This implies acceptance of full responsibility. To impair the sense of responsibility is to minimise the sense of sin. Bunyan, therefore, never questions human responsibility. He may not be able to defend it logically but he accepts it as a fact or as an axiom, and together with it he accepts a pronounced and advanced doctrine of predestination and election.

God then created spiritual beings with the potency of evil. This is manifest because, as a matter of fact, sin appeared in the course of their development and history, Yet man was not bound nor doomed nor fated to fall; he had, as Bunyan says, at the first strength to stand, if he had used it. Granted that sin originally presented itself to man from without, there must, however, at the same time have been something in him to which sin could appeal and of which it could take hold. There is no such "something" in the lower animals. The potentiality of evil would seem to be inseparably involved in the faculty of choice with which God has seen fit to endow spiritual /

spiritual beings. But so also is the potentiality of good. The one would seem to be unthinkable without the other. The faculty of choice is man's highest prerogative and greatest glory, but, the corruption of the best being the worst, its possession implies the gravest risks. His brightest glory, if abused, becomes his darkest shame. To man was committed the trust of responsibility, and every trust involves, ex hypothesi, the possibility of its abuse. Beings who hold in any real sense the gift of choice are liable to choose amiss. The origin of sin is thus the misapplication or misdirection of the will.

Bunyan is, by no means, given to metaphysical speculation, but it is interesting to note that in one passage in his exposition of the early chapters of Genesis, he ventures into deeper waters than is his wont. "God saw that the light was good. The darkness that before did cover the face of the waters, was not a creature of God, but a privation, or that which was caused by reason that light was not as yet in the world: so sin, that darkness that might be felt, is not the workmanship of God in the soul, but that which is the work of the devil; and that taketh occasion to be, by reason that the true light as yet, doth not shine in the soul". Bunyan evidently found some /

some satisfaction in the privation or negation theory of the origin of sin. This view has had its exponents in the history of theology, and, no doubt, contains a considerable element of truth. We find, for instance, the following in so modern a teacher as Robertson of Brighton:- "Sin<sup>1</sup> is not a real thing. It is rather the absence of a something, the will to do right. It is not a disease or taint, an actual something projected into the constitution. It is the absence of the spirit which harmonizes the whole .. Sin therefore is not in the appetites, but in the absence of a controlling will". Yet elsewhere Robertson asserts that sin is a principle, in the sense that "separate acts of sin are but the manifestations of one great principle." It might perhaps be argued that a "privation" and a "principle" constitute a contradiction in terms, but Robertson would have probably replied that the "principle" or essential and unifying factor in this case is actually a privation. Bunyan probably did not think out the implications of the privation theory. We can scarcely imagine him saying with Robertson that sin is not a real thing, for he was deeply impressed, not to say, obsessed, with its actuality. To trace /

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1. Sermons. 1st series pp. 104-5.

trace the origin of such a glaring entity as sin to a non-entity may be in harmony with the theory of Christian Science, but Bunyan would scarcely have found such a solution satisfactory. To him the privation theory appealed, because it seemed to him to repudiate definitely any responsibility on God's part for the emergence of sin. As a matter of fact, though it has much to commend it, it is not without its difficulties - which is the utmost that can be said in favour of any ~~proffered~~ solution of the mystery.

Man, as created by God, was endowed with a certain freedom and responsibility, and this, as the event proved, issued in the appearance of sin. As Turretin puts it:-  
 ' Vera<sup>1</sup> causa peccati libera hominis voluntas. Does Bunyan essay any answer to the question, Why did God bestow upon man this perilous, and, in some cases, disastrous gift? This, too, is no burning question but a subsidiary matter with Bunyan who, as we have seen, was much less interested in theories than in facts. But his answer may be easily gleaned from his writings. Take the following from his treatise, "Of Antichrist and His Ruin":-  
 "And /

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1. Turretin p. 51.

"And<sup>1</sup> the reason why Antichrist came into the world was, that the Church, which is the body of Christ, might be tried and made white by suffering under his tyranny and by bearing witness against his falsehoods. For, for the trial of the faithful and for the punishment of the world, Antichrist was admitted to come". Antichrist is a special manifestation of sin; on Bunyan's view it is "the spirit<sup>2</sup> of the priestly system" including the Papacy and more than the Papacy. The temporary permission by God of the existence and activities of Satan and sin may be accounted for on the same principle as the temporary permission of the evil-working energies of Antichrist. Satan may be substituted for Antichrist in the passage quoted. Sin would not be suffered to continue if it could not somehow be overruled for good. It is indeed allowed great latitude in the world, but in the end God will be found to have retained control all through. The mystery of the origin and permission of iniquity will finally work out to the glory of God. A race of men is of much more value than a race of automatons or animals, and in spite of the risks /

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1. Offor. Vol. II. p. 46.

2. Brown. Vol. II. p. 185.

risks involved, in spite of the havoc wrought by sin, God in the end will not have cause to repent that He made man. Sin appeared because the brightest sunshine is attended by the deepest shadow, but in the end the shadows will be dispelled, and the glory of the sun will be more enhanced. The Deity must have foreseen that, even in the event of the worst possibility, the good would far outweigh the evil in the end. To create a race with the potentiality and even the probability of sin would redound more to the glory of God than to refrain from such an experiment. God values above everything the loving devotion and service of free wills. To Him it is worth while to secure these even at the expense of the temporary emergence of sin. According to any true scale of values, spontaneous obedience and willing surrender constitute a far higher tribute to the recipient than forced or blind and unconscious compliance.

It may be noted, in conclusion, that Bunyan does not solve nor ease the difficulty of the reason why, by way of the expedient of universal restoration, this being on his view contrary to Holy Scripture. Evil is permitted "for the trial of the faithful and for the punishment of the world". There are on his view some, it may be /



be many, who will suffer eternal punishment. There is no sign that Bunyan asked himself the question, so familiar to the modern mind:- How is it conceivable that the final ruin of a single soul, not to speak of a multitude of souls can redound to the glory of God? If he did so, he would doubtless have answered that it redounds to the glory of God's justice. But is not, it may be further asked, the ultimate and irretrievable loss of a single soul a failure on God's part? Bunyan would not have admitted it. The older theology was much more unquestioning than ours. We raise and discuss questions which to Bunyan would have appeared impious and irreverent. He was content to adhere to Scripture as he interpreted it. The Bible and his own heart assured him that such is the appalling nature of sin if persisted in, constituting as it does an affront against God, that its disastrous issues must indeed be beyond human conception, and may well be eternal. He could not therefore accept any facile theory of universal restoration. Whatever be our theory of the origin of sin, it is, on Bunyan's view, illegitimate for us to seek to justify it on the ground of the unscriptural hypothesis of the final salvation of all.

SECTION B. - CONTENT.

(4) The Extent of Sin.

## SECTION B.

### (4) The Extent of Sin.

Bunyan's doctrine of the Extent of Sin may be expected to include his answer to two questions, the first concerning itself with the range, and the second with the depth of the evil infection in humanity. In other words, how many of us, human beings are sinful, and how sinful are we?

To the first question, at least, his answer is explicit and unambiguous. So far as ordinary humanity is concerned, sinfulness is universal. It is co-terminous with the human race. No mere man is exempt or immune from it at any stage of his earthly existence. It is the fatal inheritance transmitted to all their descendants by our first parents. Therein lies the explanation of the universal prevalence of sin among humanity. No son of man can hope to prove himself sinless unless he can disprove his direct and unqualified descent from Adam.

"Every<sup>1</sup> man in a state of nature is in the gall of sin; he was shapen in it, conceived in it; it has also possession /

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1. Offor Vol. I. p. 696.

possession, and by that possession infected the whole of his soul and body." "Thou<sup>1</sup> art under the wrath of God, and hast been ever since thou camest into the world, being then in thy first parents, those that did transgress against thy Maker." Adam is "the<sup>2</sup> destroyer of the world." He left mankind "a broken<sup>3</sup> covenant." He "made them himself sinners against it." He "did deprive them of their strength by which they were enabled to stand and left them no more than dead men." He "was the conduit pipe through which the devil did convey off his poisoned spawn and venom nature into the hearts of Adam's sons and daughters."

Bunyan finds ample testimony in Scripture to the universality of sin. His proof-texts<sup>4</sup> are such as the following:- 'There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not.' (Eccl. 7. 20) and 'there is no man that sinneth not (I. Kings 8: 46). Man, he maintains, is by nature a bad tree and as such, cannot bring forth good fruit. Further Scriptural evidence to the same purport he adduces as follows:- "Now<sup>5</sup> how soon their youth was corrupted /

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1. Offor Vol. II. p. 136.

2. Offor Vol. I. p. 85.

3. Ibid p. 505.

4. Ibid p. 307.

5. Ibid Vol. II. p. 486.

corrupted David shows by these words, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me (Ps. 51: 5). Ezekiel also shows we were polluted in the day that we were born (Ez. 16: 1 - 8). Further God to Moses strongly affirms it in that He commands that for the first-born in whom the rest were included, an offering should be offered, by that they were a month old."

According to Bunyan, not even the tenderest infant is an exception to the universality of sin. He draws no attractive pictures of alleged early innocence nor does he anticipate Wordsworth's sentiment that "heaven lies about us in our infancy." Whatever his view of what "lies about us", he is quite clear that something much more akin to hell than to heaven lies within us in our infancy. Take the following from his catechetical "Instruction"<sup>1</sup> for the Ignorant":- "Q. How doth it appear that we come into the world polluted? A. We are the fruit of an unclean thing, are defiled in our very conception, and are by nature the children of wrath. Q. Can you make further proof of this? A. Yes. it is said that by one man came sin, death, judgment and condemnation upon all men. Q. Do we then come sinners into the world? A. Yes, we are transgressors from /

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1. Offor Vol. II. p. 677.

from the womb, and go astray as soon as we are born, speaking lies." Bunyan goes on to state that "Adam's faith saved not the world, though Adam's sin overthrew it, for the reason that he fell as a "public person", as the representative of humanity, as our "federal head", but that "he believed the promise as a single person," a private individual. Bunyan emphatically rejects the theory that we are sinners "only by imitation", for the reason that "God's word saith we are children of wrath by nature, that is, by birth and generation." He holds that, in this, experience corroborates the pronouncement of Scripture. "The<sup>1</sup> first things that bloom and put forth themselves in children show their ignorance of God, their disobedience to parents, and their innate enmity to holiness of life; their inclinations naturally run to vanity. Besides, little children die but that they could not, were they not of God accounted sinners; for death is the wages of sin". To Bunyan the death of an infant is one proof, among many, of the sinfulness of our race even in its most youthful representatives. Even the children of godly parents "have<sup>2</sup> not the advantage of election for their father's sakes. They are born as others /

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1. *ibid.*

2. *Offer* Vol. III. p. 624.

others the children of wrath . . . Grace comes not unto them as an inheritance." Even "those that are godly educated from their childhood and so drink in the principles of Christianity they know not how" are no exception to the universal rule. They too need to be "taught of God." They too must produce the qualification of "the broken heart." Such as they are peculiarly apt to be caught in the snare of self-righteousness.

A sinless infant, according to Bunyan's teaching, never has been and never will be born of the race of Adam by ordinary generation. "Man<sup>1</sup> in his birth is compared (in Scripture) to an ass, an unclean beast, and to a wretched infant in its blood" (Job II. 12; Ez. 16). There had come to Bunyan's cognizance a theory to the effect that "Christ by His death hath taken away original sin" but he rejects it as "not worth a rush" for two reasons, first, "because it is scriptureless" and secondly "because it makes them (i.e. those who are alleged to be free of original sin) incapable of salvation by Christ; for none but those that in their own persons are sinners are to have salvation by Him." The first reason is probably valid, though it savours of the argumentum a silentio /

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1. Offer Vol. III. p. 597.

silentio. The second appears to lack ingenuousness. But the broad fact that original sin has not disappeared since the death of Christ even in Christian families and communities cannot be denied. Such is the testimony of experience confirmed by modern scientific investigations in the realm of heredity. In all likelihood, the theory so scornfully repudiated by Bunyan was put forward by some of those who were deeply concerned in the hereafter of children dying in infancy. Such parents, it will be admitted, did well to cherish the hope that all was "well with the child", though the reason they gave for the hope that was in them could not bear the keen scrutiny of Bunyan.

We have shown that our author teaches that sin is contemporary with all human life, beginning even earlier than the cradle, and, as we shall see later, ending only, and that only in the case of the redeemed, at the grave. We now pass to the second of the questions raised at the outset of this section:- How sinful are we? The extent of sin, in the deepest sense of the term, demands intensive, as well as extensive, investigation. To the former we now direct our efforts. Granted that sin has done /



done harm to all of us, how grievous is the harm that has been wrought? We have admittedly suffered disablement - but to what extent? We have received poison into our system - to what extent has it affected us deleteriously?

Bunyan's answer to these questions, though not free from certain difficulties and the suspicion of self-contradiction, is sufficiently pronounced and emphatic. In his exposition of the early chapters of Genesis we find the following:- "As<sup>1</sup> the first chaos remained without form and void, until the Spirit of God moved to work upon it, and by working to put this world into frame and order; so man, as he comes into the world, abides a confused lump, an unclean thing, a creature without New Testament order until by the Spirit of the Lord he is transformed into the image of Christ" (Gen. I:15). Many other passages to the same effect may be cited. "We<sup>2</sup> see our nature as full of the filth of sin as the egg is of meat or the toad of poison." "Man<sup>3</sup>, as he comes into the world, is not only a dead man, a fool, proud, self-willed, fearless, and a false believer, but a /

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1. Offor Vol. II. p. 418.  
 2. Offor Vol. I. p. 612.  
 3. Ibid p. 706.

a great lover of sin: he is captivated, ravished, drowned with the delights of it." "By<sup>1</sup> nature he is an enemy to God, an enemy in his mind . . he was not over-persuaded on a sudden to sin against God, but he drank this sin, like water, into his very nature, mingled it with every faculty of his soul and member of his body." "What power<sup>2</sup> has he that is dead, as every natural man spiritually is, even dead in trespasses and sins? Dead, even as dead to God's New Testament things as he that is in his grave. is dead to the things of this world. What power hath he then whereby to come to Jesus Christ? . . . By this text (John 6: 44) there is not only insinuated that in man is want of power, but also of will, to come to Jesus Christ: they must be drawn; they come not if they be not drawn." Concerning the lost sheep he asks the pointed and significant question, "Did<sup>3</sup> it go one step homewards upon its own legs?" Man's total depravity, utter helplessness and entire dependence on God's mercy are graphically portrayed in the following:- Should<sup>4</sup> it be said there is such a lord has a son, a poor decrepid thing; he is forced to wear things to strengthen /

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1. Ibid p. 349.

2. Ibid p. 275, 6.

3. Vol. II. p. 31.

4. Vol. I. p. 609.

strengthen his ankles, things to strengthen his loins, things to keep up his bowels, things to strengthen his shoulders, his neck, his hands, his fingers; yea, he cannot speak but by the help of an engine, nor chew his food but by the help of an engine."

Yet Bunyan holds that, in some sense, the will of man is free. He has little difficulty in maintaining this in the case of purely actual sins which presuppose deliberate choice and consent. "The devil<sup>1</sup> nor men of the world can kill thy righteousness or love to it, but by thy own hand; or separate that and thee asunder without thine own act." This, however, probably applies solely to lapses into sin after regeneration. The case of the unregenerate who are enthralled by original sin, is less clear. There are many passages which seem to place their utter helplessness and inability of will beyond doubt, as for instance the following:- "Where<sup>2</sup> the will is made more quickly to comply with its salvation, 'tis no thanks to the sinner at all (Job. 14: 18). 'Tis the day of the power of the Lord that has made the work so soon to appear." Yet a few sentences earlier there occur these words:- "Man, though he has free will, yet is /

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1. Vol. II. p. 721.  
2. Vol. II. p. 31.

is willing by no means to be saved God's way . . . before the day of God's power comes upon him. Apparently even the state of original sin is compatible, in Bunyan's eyes, with a certain freedom of the will. He is not prepared to go the length of explicitly denying man's responsibility even in his most powerless state. But the freedom which he maintains, he declares to be associated with a rooted and innate repugnance to be saved in "God's way", which<sup>repugnance</sup>/ God only can overcome. He thus seems to take away with one hand what he has given with the other.

So far as spiritual things and the attainment of his own salvation are concerned it is clear, from a multitude of his utterances, that Bunyan holds that fallen man has lost his freedom. He would have subscribed without hesitation to the following pronouncements in the Westminster Confession:- "Man<sup>1</sup> by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto." "From this<sup>2</sup> original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good /

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1. Westminster Confession Chap. IX.  
2. Ibid chap. VI.

good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions." A distinction is drawn in the Augsburg Confession<sup>1</sup>, following the teaching of St. Augustine, between two spheres - the civil and the spiritual - in which the freedom of man's will may conceivably operate. Social life postulates individual responsibility. In our intercourse with each other we tacitly assume that we are free agents, and it is conceded that in that realm a certain liberty is ours. "Man's will hath some liberty to work a civil righteousness and to choose such things as reason can reach unto; but . . . it hath no power to work the righteousness of God, or a spiritual righteousness, without the Spirit of God." With this distinction and this testimony Bunyan agreed. The corruption of man's nature and the disablement of his will through original sin is emphasized in all the Protestant standards in more or less stringent terms, and it is clear that Bunyan ranged himself with those who, like the authors of the Westminster Confession stated these doctrines in their most pronounced and uncompromising form.

The total inability of sinful man as taught by Bunyan /

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1. Schaff p. 18 - 19.

Bunyan would seem to be logically subversive and destructive of any theory of human responsibility. But he certainly believed that men are salvable and that they are responsible beings. He exulted in preaching free grace, which would seem to imply that man is able to accept it or to reject it. Here we are confronted with an antinomy which we not less than Bunyan, can scarcely claim to solve. This difficulty and kindred difficulties are thus frankly envisaged by Dr. Alexander Whyte. "Indeed<sup>1</sup> it is beyond the wit of man, and it takes all the wit of God aright to unite the doctrine of our utter inability with the companion doctrine of our strict responsibility; free grace with a full reward; the cross of Christ once for all with the saints' continual crucifixion; the Saviour's blood with the sinner's; and atonement with attainment; in short salvation without works with no salvation without works." The key to Calvinism and to Bunyan's theology probably lies in this, that everything is viewed from the standpoint of God and not of man. All glory is ascribed to God. Man's salvation is God's work, but, for man's sin, man alone is responsible. To these /

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1. Bunyan Characters Vol. III. p. 145.

these two truths Bunyan clings. He found them both in Scripture, and Scripture was to him the final court of appeal. He was not interested in theory or in logical exactness for their own sakes - His work was practical, and he was primarily concerned with facts as he found them.

Bunyan's view of original sin and total depravity brought him into conflict with those who in any way found it possible to extol man's natural excellence. He had a keen scent for any taint or suspicion of the Pelagian heresy which he was quick to detect and prompt and vigorous to expose and assail. Prominent examples of this are his controversies with the Quakers and with Edward Fowler, a Bedfordshire rector, afterwards Bishop of Gloucester.

The characteristically Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light, founded in particular on John I: 9, was repellent to Bunyan. To him it seemed incompatible with any true and scriptural view of original sin. The Quakers taught<sup>1</sup> that everyone is endowed in some measure however small with the Spirit of Christ. This Bunyan denied. He held that /

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1. Offor Vol. II. p. 195.

that the highest and purest light that is in an unconverted man is not the light of Christ. He draws a sharp line of distinction<sup>1</sup> between conscience and Christ in man, between the light of nature and the Spirit of God, between nature and grace, and he holds that it is the devil's work to seek to obliterate or obscure it. He stresses the necessity, for all, of the experience of the new birth. Quakerism, as he understood it, involved a glorification of the natural man, which he felt to be false to Scripture and to experience. His plain teaching is that "man by nature is in a state of wrath and condemnation" (Eph. 2: 1-4, Jn. 3:18) and that "the natural man, by all his natural abilities is not able to save himself from this his condemned condition" (Jn. 6:44; Eph. I. 19, 20) . . . "The<sup>2</sup> word of God doth as assuredly condemn man's righteousness as it doth condemn man's sin; it condemneth not man's righteousness among men, for there it is good and profitable (Job 35: 6-8); but, with God, to save the soul, it is no better than filthy rags" (Is. 64: 6). Bunyan stood for the reality and gravity of sin, and any fancied mitigation of that stern fact he could not abide.

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1. Ibid p. 197, 712.

2. Ofor Vol. II. p. 712.



The ruin of human nature wrought by the Fall, left, in his opinion, not one stone upon another. Restoration upon the remnants of the old structure was to him utterly impracticable and unthinkable. He stood for a supernatural Christianity, believing that therein lay man's only hope of salvation. He magnified sin that grace might be yet more magnified. In short he was jealous for the glory of God, and therein lay the root of his opposition to the Quakers, whom, rightly or wrongly, he held to derogate therefrom.

Akin to his quarrel with Quakerism and prompted by similar motives was his controversy with Fowler, who also, from Bunyan's point of view, was guilty of idealising or rather of idolising and therefore falsifying and misrepresenting the natural man and his alleged righteousness. Fowler's book, which aroused Bunyan's hostility, was entitled "The Design of Christianity". Its object, according to Offer<sup>1</sup>, was to show that "Christianity is intended merely to restore man to the original state which he enjoyed before the fall"; or in Fowler's own words<sup>2</sup> "As it was the errand of Christ to effect out deliverance out of that /

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1. *ibid* p. 278.

2. *ibid* p. 291.

that sinful state we had brought ourselves into: so to put us again into possession of that holiness which we had lost."

Bunyan rejects this as an entirely inadequate conception of the work of Christ. Christ, he maintains, did not come merely to re-instate us into the position of primitive innocence which Adam occupied before the Fall. This would involve the pre-eminence of Adam and not of Christ, of the natural man and not of the spiritual man.<sup>1</sup> The holiness that was in Adam "even in his first and best estate" was only "the sinless state of a natural man"; it was "earthly and not of the Holy Ghost". Bunyan, it is important to note, makes little of the image of God in man, so far as exhibited by Adam. In his "Instruction for the Ignorant" we find the following:- "Q. Why<sup>2</sup> doth it say, God breathed into him the breath of life; is man's soul of the very nature of the Godhead? A. This doth not teach that the soul is of the nature of the Godhead, but it sheweth that it is not of the same matter as the body, which is dust (Gen. 18: 27). Q. Is not the soul then of the nature of the godhead. A. No, for God cannot /

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1. Ibid. p. 300-1.

2. Offor. Vol. II. p. 676-7

cannot sin, but the soul doth". This emphasizes the transcendence of God and the difference between Creator and created. But it must be coupled with such statements as the following:- "As<sup>1</sup> there is in the Godhead power, knowledge, love and righteousness so a likeness of these is in the soul of man, especially man before he had sinned" For Bunyan, Christ and not Adam is the true image of God. "Though Adam be here (Gen. 1: 26) called the image or similitude of God; yet but so as he was the shadow of a most excellent image. Adam was a type of Christ who only is the 'express image' of His Father's person and the likeness of His excellent glory" (Heb. I: 3.) "Adam<sup>2</sup> stood by a covenant of works; Adam's kingdom was an earthly paradise; Adam's excellency was that he had no need of a Saviour, and Adam's knowledge was ignorance of Jesus Christ .., Adam in his innocency was a mere natural man". A return to primeval innocence is therefore not enough; it is no worthy ideal for a spiritual man and a Christian. "Those that think it sufficient to attain to the state of Adam in innocency, think it sufficient to be mere naturalists; /

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1. *ibid.* p. 422-3.

2. *ibid.* p. 427.

naturalists; think themselves well without being made spiritual: yea, let me add, they think it safe standing by a covenant of works" ... "No man<sup>1</sup> can be a living soul in that kingdom (of Christ) by his first creation, he must have life breathed into him, life and spirit from Jesus Christ."

Bunyan, therefore, vigorously attacks Fowler's view of a return to the primeval image of God in man as the goal of redeemed humanity. "That<sup>2</sup> similitude ("the similitude or likeness of God that was in us at our creation before we sinned") being at best created, and since most unspeakably defiled, debased, and polluted with sin; there is now, no not in the best of men, as men, any likeness or similitude of God to be found, no such petty divine, or godlike nature to be found as you (Fowler) imagine." Fowler speaks of the purity of human nature; Bunyan says there is no such thing. Fowler lays much stress on natural righteousness and natural reason. Bunyan begins with God not with man, not with "the<sup>3</sup> purity of human nature but of the Holy Ghost itself which we have of God received by believing in the Son of God." Bunyan points out that Fowler says nothing of faith. Such a man as /

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1. Ibid. p. 425.

2. Ibid, p. 283.

3. Offor. Vol. II. p. 284.

as Fowler's ideal may be ignorant of Christ whereas, as Bunyan points out elsewhere, the coming of Christ to be Saviour is "the<sup>1</sup> greatest discovery of man's misery and inability to save himself therefrom that ever was made in the world." Fowler's principles,<sup>2</sup> Bunyan holds, are merely those of nature or of reason, and, according to his mode of thinking there would be no essential difference between paganism and Christianity. The excellence and goodness which Fowler recommends, are, on Bunyan's view, those of this world, not the righteousness of Christ. His teaching is criticised as natural, rational, legalistic but not Christian. Bunyan, on the other hand, champions an uncompromisingly supernatural Christianity; "The holy Christian's actions are the fruit of the Spirit of God, the fruit of righteousness that is by Jesus Christ, not of our human nature". In picturesque and humorous phrase Bunyan declares that all that Fowler presents us with is "the<sup>3</sup> old gentleman in his holiday clothes" - which being interpreted is the unregenerate nature at its best, "the old heart, the old spirit, the spirit of the man, not the spirit of Christ". Elsewhere in the same treatise Bunyan asserts /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 402.
  2. Vol. II. pp. 285-6.
  3. Ibid. p. 290.

asserts that Fowler treats of sin "more<sup>1</sup> like a heathen philosopher than a minister of the gospel." Christianity, Bunyan maintains, is something new and sui generis, something vastly different from pagan and naturalistic thought. He upholds the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the Christian Gospel.

The ancient controversy between Fowler and Bunyan, when we trace it to its fundamental principles, is thus found, contrary perhaps to expectation, to concern itself with a live issue. Bunyan may have misunderstood his antagonist; in the heat of discussion he may have unconsciously misrepresented him, and exaggerated what he conceived to be the objectionable features in his teaching. Still, we hold, that the instinct was right which led Bunyan to protest so vehemently. Of the two, Bunyan and not Fowler stands in the true line of apostolical and Protestant succession. His standpoint is certainly more in harmony than the other with the faith which "taught original sin, the corruption of Man's Heart." Before we take leave of Bunyan's view of the Extent of Sin, it would seem to be in place to consider his teaching on what /

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1. Ibid. p. 307.

what is technically known as Perfectionism or Perfectibility, though this might alternatively come under the rubric of sanctification. Bunyan is certainly not to be ranked with those who belittle the change which occurs at regeneration. There is, for him, a very definite distinction between the state of sin and the state of grace. It is admitted that sin sustains a grievous wound at conversion, but Bunyan is careful to insist that, at that point, it is by no means definitely killed. In the believer it survives even the great change of regeneration. It is folly to expect to be immune from its infection and free from its legacy of complications, until the other great change of death has been safely surmounted. Bunyan holds, quite indubitably, that even in the chief of saints, perfection or anything approaching thereto is not to be looked for in this life. Sin, in greater or less measure, is co-extensive with humanity on earth. No living man in this world can truthfully claim to have reached sinlessness. Sin in the believer is indeed a weakened and moribund force, but it constantly asserts its vitality in an alarming and dangerous fashion. Bunyan, therefore, emphatically repudiates any doctrine tending /

tending in the direction of perfectionism. Herein lies part of his quarrel with the Quakers and with the much less reputable Ranters. "The<sup>1</sup>Ranters," he says, "would profess that they are without sin, and how far short of this opinion", he asks" are the Quakers?" - by which he doubtless means that both Ranters and Quakers had in this matter fallen into grievous error. For himself he is in line with such Puritan teaching as is contained in John Owen's treatise entitled "The Nature,<sup>2</sup> Power, Deceit and Prevalency of the remainders of Indwelling-Sin in Believers", the whole tenor and drift of which are that sin in the believer is, by no means, a spent force.

We proceed to adduce quotations from Bunyan's writings in assertion, in proof, and in explanation of his position. We take first instances of his assertion of the continued presence of sin in the believer. "Justified<sup>3</sup> men are yet sinners in themselves, are yet full of imperfections; yea, sinful imperfections" ... "Justification then only covereth our sin from the sight of God; it maketh us not perfect with inherent profection" ... "Justifying righteousness is accompanied with graces. - the /

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1. Offor. Vol. II. p. 182.

2. London. 1668.

3. Offor. Vol. I. p. 212.



the graces of the spirit .... they come when justification comes .. But, I say, how many soever they are, and how fast soever they grow, their utmost arrivement here is but a state short of perfection." "Albeit<sup>1</sup> that Christ hath most certainly secured the elect and chosen of God from perishing by what Satan hath done; yet the very elect themselves are, by reason of the first transgression, so infested and annoyed with inward filth, and so assaulted still by the devil and his vassals, the proper children of hell, that they groan unutterably under their burthen" ... "We<sup>2</sup> have through Christ the continuation and multiplication of forgivenesses, without which there is no salvation .. For there is not a day nor a duty; not a day that thou livest, nor a duty that thou dost, but will need that mercy should come after to take away thy iniquity. Nay, thou canst not receive mercy so clearly as not to stand in need of another act of mercy to pardon weakness in thy no better receiving the last. We receive not a mercy so humbly, so readily, so gladly, and with that thankfulness we should: and, therefore, for the want of these, have the need of another and another act of God's sin-pardoning mercy, and need shall have /

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1. Offor. Vol. II. p. 436.  
 2. Offor. Vol. I. p. 679.

have thereof so long as evil time shall last with us."

In his treatise entitled "A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity" based on the text - 'let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity' (2 Tim. 2: 19) - this question is discussed at considerable length, and the writer makes his personal attitude quite clear as, for instance, in the following passages:- "in<sup>1</sup> some sense even the best of saints cannot depart from sin or iniquity" .. "sin being one of the most quick and brisk things that are, it will also have its motions and lusts accordingly" .. "The scent, the smell, the rank and odious stink of sin abide upon, yea and will abide upon us when most spiritual here, and upon our most spiritual actions too, until they be taken away by Christ" .. "Grace<sup>2</sup> is weak, weak in the best and most strong of the saints of God". "This<sup>3</sup> (the present world) is no place of perfection, and consequently no place where God's people can depart from iniquity as they should". "There<sup>4</sup> are no means that can cure a man that is sick of sin but glory ... the more grace every man has, the more is he sick of sin .. there is nothing that can /

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- 1. Offor. Vol. II. p. 515.
  - 2. Ibid. Vol. II. p. 524,
  - 3. Ibid. p. 525.
  - 4. Ibid. p. 542.

can cure this disease but glory; but immortal glory". Christians are "plagued"<sup>1</sup> every day with the working of "their own inward corruptions; "bless God, therefore if".. "thou keepest them from breaking out". The sum and substance of the matter is this, "departing"<sup>2</sup> from iniquity is a work for length as long as life shall last. A work did I say? It is a war, a continual combat". The same thesis is pictorially maintained in "The Pilgrim's Progress" itself, by far the larger part of which describes the pilgrim's conflicts after he had been relieved of the burden of sin at the Cross. Obviously Bunyan adheres to the orthodox distinction between justification and sanctification, and he will not consent to merge the latter in the former. "Sin"<sup>3</sup> he maintains, "is in the best of men: and as long as it is so, without great watchfulness and humble walking with God, we may be exposed to shame and suffering for it. What sin is it that a child of God is not liable to commit, excepting that which is the sin unpardonable? Nor have we a promise of being kept from any other sin but on condition that we watch and pray." He teaches that, without God's grace, the saint would inevitably /

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- 1. Ibid. p. 544.
  - 2. Offor. Vol. II. p. 546.
  - 3. Ibid. p. 705.

inevitably fall. "So<sup>1</sup> desperately wicked is the flesh of saints that, should they be left to themselves but a little while, none knows what horrible transgressions would break out."

Bunyan bases his repudiation of perfectionism on proofs drawn from the armouries of Scripture and experience. In Holy Writ, he points out, the Christian<sup>is</sup> frequently exhorted "to<sup>2</sup> grow, to follow on, to press forward, and to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord". Even the best lives, recorded therein, of apostles and prophets disclose and acknowledge imperfection. We see them eagerly pursuing righteousness but never fully attaining it in this world. Their highest acts of holiness are tainted with sin. Moreover, "the righteousness<sup>3</sup> by the which the best of saints are justified in the sight of God is a righteousness of another, not their own." In his treatises, "The Work of Jesus Christ as an Advocate" (based on 1. John II: 1) and "Christ a complete Saviour, or the Intercession of Christ, and who are privileged in it." (based on Heb. 7: 25), Bunyan points out that Christ's redeeming work did not end on the Cross. There still remains His unceasing intercession and advocacy at the /

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- 1. Ibid. p. 31.
  - 2. Ibid. p. 124.
  - 3. Ibid. p. 524.

the right hand of God. "And<sup>1</sup> this is the reason or one of the reasons why they that are justified have need of an intercessor - to wit to save us from the evil of sin that remains in our flesh after we are justified through Christ and set free from the law as to condemnation". Scripture admittedly teaches the doctrine of the high priestly intercession of Christ in heaven, and Bunyan maintains that this doctrine presupposes the continued presence of sin in the believer after regeneration, otherwise it would be superfluous and unintelligible.

Moreover, Scripture in this matter is held to be seconded by the voice of experience. Hopeful's confession in "The Pilgrim's Progress" may be taken as typical, on Bunyan's view, of the attitude of a Christian who deals honestly with himself:- "If<sup>2</sup> I look narrowly into the best of what I do now, I still see sin, new sin, mixing itself with the best of that I do: so that now I am forced to conclude that, notwithstanding my former fond conceit of myself and duties, I have committed sin enough in one duty to send me to hell, though my former life had been faultless". It is manifest that Bunyan holds that those who say, whether before or after regeneration, /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 212.

2. The Pilgrim's Progress p. 183.

regeneration, that they have no sin, deceive themselves. It is, no doubt, proverbially difficult to prove such a negative as that there is not and never has been such a being as a sinless Christian on earth, but Bunyan is on safe ground in maintaining that he has behind and around him the support of an impressive cloud of witnesses, and that any alleged exceptions may be fairly regarded as the victims of self-ignorance and self-deception.

We come, finally, to the explanation which Bunyan essays to offer for the foregoing perplexing and mysterious fact. Why is sin permitted to continue to rage in the believer after regeneration? Why did not Christ's redeeming work involve the immediate extirpation of sin in all who accept its benefits? Why was that great work left apparently incomplete and unfinished? At the close of the "Holy War", in the speech of Emmanuel which Dr. Whyte<sup>1</sup> calls "Emmanuel's Last Charge to Mansoul: concerning the Remains of Sin in the Regenerate", Bunyan produces his answer. Emmanuel gives his reasons why, "I<sup>2</sup>, at first, and do still suffer Diabolonians to dwell in thy walls, O Mansoul". These reasons are expounded and developed in Dr. Whyte's best style in the chapter in his "Bunyan Characters " /

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1. Bunyan Characters Vol. III p. 291. sqq.
2. Offor. Vol. III p. 372.

Characters" of which we have just quoted the title; and they are illuminating and helpful. Sin is suffered to remain in the believer not to do him hurt but good. Its presence fosters humility and demands watchfulness - both excellent qualities, which, if sin were withdrawn at once, might very well dwindle and disappear. Moreover, sin tries the Christian's love, and, if manfully encountered heightens it. Further, it serves to magnify the grace of God and to promote His glory. The more sin abounds and extends, the more must the grace of God abound and extend in order to overcome it. The more defiant the challenge thrown down by sin, the more glorious the triumph of grace which takes up that challenge and overthrows the challenger. The higher sin is permitted to rise, the greater will be its final downfall. It will be forced to bear its own unwilling but striking testimony to the conquering grace of God. With this solution of the mystery of the Extent of Iniquity we may well rest content. Let it suffice that, at the long last, in the alchemy of God's providence, it is made to work out to the greater glory of God. Let it suffice that here the ancient prophecy will one day find fulfilment:- 'the wrath of men shall praise Thee' (Ps. 76:10).

SECTION B. - CONTENT.

(5) The Consequences of Sin.



SECTION B.(5) The Consequences of Sin.

No epithet nor combination of epithets in the English or in any other language is at all adequate to set forth the appalling and terrific consequences of sin, as Bunyan viewed them - As we have had ample opportunity of seeing, he diagnosed sin as a self-inflicted disease of unexampled gravity. We proceed to show that, to him, its issues were correspondingly disastrous. Sin being what it is, is inevitably attended by ruinous consequences to those associated with it. It is fundamentally an insult and a defiance directed against the God of holiness and love. God cannot but react against it. His infinite resources and His Almighty power are necessarily enlisted against sin. It is, and always has been, and ever shall be His enemy. It is the direct antithesis of His glorious attributes. It has dared to direct itself against Him, and there can be no peace until it is overthrown. The Calvinistic and Puritan system of doctrine is essentially theocentric. It seeks to estimate sin, primarily from the /

the view-point of God. Hence its overwhelming sense of sin's inherent gravity. According to the Catechisms of the Westminster Divines,<sup>1</sup> association with sin affects man's relationship to God, both negatively and positively. Its negative result is loss of communion with God, breach of all possible fellowship between the heavenly Father and His rebellious child, rupture of every bond of friendship and love. Sin severs all harmonious intercourse between God and man. It shatters the Jacob's ladder of communication between earth and heaven, leaving only an impassable gulf. But, more than that, it introduces a positive state of active hostility and warfare. It calls down upon sinful man God's wrath and curse. The consequences of sin are therefore of the nature of punishment or penalty. Bunyan would not have been content to regard them, in modern fashion, as the natural harvest of the evil seed sown. This attitude is, no doubt, true so far as it goes, but it tends to obscure the personal intervention of God. To Bunyan the evils and afflictions attendant upon sin are the direct expression of the wrath of God, and they are to be viewed essentially as punishments inflicted upon the offender or upon those who are unfortunate /

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1. Larger Catechism Q. 27; Shorter Catechism Q. 19.

unfortunate enough to be in some manner linked with him.

The Larger Catechism<sup>1</sup> divides the punishments of sin into two groups - those inflicted in this world, and those inflicted in the world to come. This classification was known to Bunyan, as is evidenced by the following Question and Answer<sup>2</sup>, taken from his "Instruction for the Ignorant"

"Q. Where will God punish sinners for their sins? A. Both in this world and in that which is to come." We propose therefore to adopt this arrangement in our treatment of the topic.

We take, first, then Bunyan's teaching in regard to the punishment of sin in this world. This is summarised in the following Question and Answer.<sup>3</sup>

"Q. How are men punished in this world for sin? A. Many ways, as with sickness, losses, crosses, disappointments, and the like: sometimes also God giveth them up to their own heart's lusts, to blindness of mind also, and hardness of heart; yea, and sometimes to strong delusions that they might believe lies, and be damned." This Answer, it will be noted, falls into two main divisions. It is, in essence, identical with the teaching of the Larger Catechism on the same point as follows:-<sup>4</sup>

"The punishments of sin in this /

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1. Q. 28, 29.

2. Ofor Vol. II. p. 678.

3. *ibid.*

4. Q. 28.

this world are, either inward, as blindness of mind, a reprobate sense, strong delusions, hardness of heart, horror of conscience, and vile affections: or outward, as the curse of God upon the creatures for our sakes, and all other evils that befall<sup>us</sup> in our bodies, names, estates, relations and employments, together with death itself." Bunyan clearly taught, in harmony with the foregoing, that the penalties of sin in this world are both outward, affecting the body and estate, and inward, affecting the character and soul.

The outward penalties of sin in this world do not bulk largely in the pages of Bunyan. He sat lightly to things temporal. Losses in estate and afflictions in body were not, to him, by any means the direst of evils. Infinitely more serious in his eyes were the spiritual penalties of sin. He probably held, as the Westminster Divines appeared to do (see Q. 28, quoted above), that all physical evil is ultimately due to moral evil or sin, though not necessarily sin in the sufferer, that wherever we find evil of any kind or suffering of any description, we may confidently conclude that some human being somewhere "has blundered." But he was not deeply /

deeply interested in physical evil nor in the problem of its connection with moral evil. What absorbed and even obsessed him was the enormity of moral evil. The most serious penalties of sin in this world were, in his eyes, those of a moral and spiritual nature, those which affected harmfully and disastrously the soul of the sinner. Of these he speaks frequently and impressively. None of the consequences following upon sin in this world were to him more grievous than what has become known as the punishment of sin by sin. "To<sup>1</sup> give it (the soul) up in sin-revenging judgment to its own ways and doings," he characterises as "the terriblest judgment under heaven." To withdraw the Holy Spirit from the sinner and to "suffer<sup>2</sup> the soul to sin more and more" this he pronounces "the very judgment of judgments." This, in his opinion, is by far the most grievous of all the penalties consequent upon sin in this world. It anticipates the finality and the hopelessness of the approaching doom. The nature of this dread punishment is thus described:- "When<sup>3</sup> men are fallen from God, they then, as the judgment of God upon them, are given up to all unrighteousness" . . .

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1. Offor Vol. I. p. 130.  
 2. Offor Vol. II. p. 528.  
 3. Offor Vol. III. p. 461.

"When<sup>1</sup> once God is angry with a people, He can deal with them, He can give them up to those lusts in judgment that they would not be separated from by mercy."

"The Life and Death of Mr Badman" is Bunyan's conception and description of the career in this world of a typical sinner, whose downward course never suffers any lasting, nor even any serious check. Even as a youth, Badman's sins were punished with yet further sin. It was through the "judgment" and "anger" of God that he became entangled in evil companionships.<sup>2</sup> To him St. Paul's words are thus applied:- "They<sup>3</sup> did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and what follows? Wherefore God gave them over or up to their own heart's lust . . . This therefore was God's hand upon him, that he might be destroyed, be damned, because he received not the love of the truth that he might be saved . . . Therefore men should be afraid of offending God because He can in this manner punish them for their sins." Beyond being "left of God" Badman suffered no conspicuous punishment for sin in this life, but, in reality, severer punishment there could not be, in reality it was the extreme sentence of the outraged law /

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1. Offor Vol. II. p. 523.  
 2. Offor Vol. III. p. 608.  
 3. ibid p. 608.

law of God. Contrary perhaps to expectation, he died "as quiet as a lamb," but we are reminded that no favourable inference as to his future could be founded upon that alone, for good men may have "consternation of spirit" at death, and it is of the wicked that the Scripture asserts that there are "no bonds in their death." Badman's earthly life was free from any striking judgment of God's wrath, and his death was peaceful, but these only heighten the impression of the awful future in store for him, these were only the lull before the thunder crash. More terrible than heavy affliction is God's silence, God's abandonment of the soul to its own evil courses, and that was how He punished Badman in this life. This dread penalty is thus strikingly enunciated:- "Thou<sup>1</sup> wicked one, thou lovest not me, my ways, nor my people; thou castest my law and my good counsel behind thy back. Come, I will dispose of thee in my wrath; thou shalt be turned over to the ungodly, thou shalt be put to school to the devil, I will leave thee to sink and swim in sin, till I shall visit thee with death and judgment."

This topic of God's abandonment of the sinner in punishment /

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1. Offer Vol. III. p. 614.

punishment for his sin is also discussed at length in Bunyan's treatise which bears the following title:-

"The Barren Fig-tree<sup>1</sup>; or the Doom and Downfall of the Fruitless Professor: showing that the day of grace may be past with him long before his life is ended: the signs also by which such miserable mortals may be known."

Prominent<sup>2</sup> among God's judgments upon the "cumber-ground" in this world are "strong delusion" and "open profaneness". When secret sin is permitted to push itself to the surface, when the hypocrite stands disclosed in his true colours, iniquity is punished by its transmutation from secret into "open" and unashamed "profaneness". Bunyan holds that "the<sup>3</sup> day of grace ends with some men before God taketh them out of this world," in proof whereof he instances the cases of Cain, Ishmael and Esau. But though it may be held as a matter of fact that these men did not recover from the consequences of their supreme acts of sin and folly, yet the Gospel of the Grace of God would seem to involve that, so long as they lived, recovery was not impossible for them. It is not for any Christian preacher to approach any living man with the fearful message that /

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1. Offor Vol. III. p. 560 sqq.

2. *ibid* p. 572.

3. *ibid* p. 577.



that he has placed himself outside the pale of hope. But it cannot be denied that persistence in sinful courses does induce a state of soul in which repentance becomes a matter of ever-increasing difficulty. This Bunyan regarded as the crowning punishment of sin in this world. "Such<sup>1</sup> a professor is almost, if not quite, past grace," when God hath given him over, or lets him alone, and suffers him to do anything, and that without control, helpeth him not either in works of holiness or in straits and difficulties. 'Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone' (Hos. 4: 17) woe be to them when I depart from them." God may punish His people's sin by abandonment; He may give them over to a "reprobate mind." "A<sup>2</sup> hard and impenitent heart is the curse of God." . . . "There<sup>3</sup> is a difference between that hardness of heart that is incident to all men, and that which comes upon some as a signal or special judgment of God." This latter is a "judicial hardness," "a hardness that is sent as a punishment for the abuse of light received, for a reward of apostacy."

This leads us to Bunyan's doctrine of the unpardonable /

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1. *ibid* p. 581.  
 2. *Offor* Vol. III. p. 582.  
 3. *ibid* p. 583.

unpardonable sin or the sin against the Holy Ghost, a subject to which he gave deep and anxious reflection, and on which his conclusions appear to be scriptural and sound. Here is a characteristic pronouncement:- "He<sup>1</sup> that has begun to grieve the Holy Ghost may be suffered to go on until he has sinned that sin which is called the sin against the Holy Ghost. And if God shall give thee up to that thou art in the iron cage out of which there is neither deliverance nor redemption." He gives an interesting and satisfying answer to the question why the sin against the Holy Ghost is so called. "It<sup>2</sup> is called the sin against the Holy Ghost because such count the works He (Christ) did which were done by the Spirit of God, the works of the spirit of the devil. Also because all such as so reject Christ Jesus the Lord, they do it in despite of that testimony which the Holy Ghost has given of Him in the holy scriptures; for the Scriptures are the breathings of the Holy Ghost, as in all other things, so in that testimony they bear of the person, of the works, sufferings, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ". The direst penalty of sin in this world is the punishment of sin by sin, which reaches its culmination in the punishment of sin /

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1. Offor. Vol. II. p. 528.  
 2. Offor. Vol. I. p. 103.

sin by the unpardonable sin. This is the plight of the familiar figure in the Pilgrim's Progress of the man in the iron cage who thus accounted for his desperate condition:- "I<sup>1</sup> left off to watch and be sober; I laid the reins on the neck of my lusts; I sinned against the light of the word, and the goodness of God; I have grieved the spirit, and He is gone; I tempted the devil and he is come to me, I have provoked God to anger and He has left me; I have so hardened my heart that I cannot repent". Such Bunyan considered to be the spiritual state into which Francis Spira brought himself, the burden of his complaint being his inability to repent.<sup>2</sup> In "The Jerusalem Sinner Saved" Bunyan discusses at considerable length the nature of the sin against the Holy Ghost, but there his object is not to alarm but to reassure. He is arguing with souls in doubt and fear who tremble lest perchance they have been guilty of the unpardonable sin - a state of spirit of which he himself had had trying personal experience. The unpardonable sin he holds is "final impenitence". "No<sup>3</sup> sin, but the sin of final impenitence can prove a man a reprobate; and (he adds in comfort /

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1. Pilgrim's Progress pp. 46-7.
  2. Offor. Vol. III. p. 582.
  3. Offor. Vol. I. p. 88.

comfort to the doubt-tossed soul) I am sure thou hast not arrived as yet unto that". The sin against the Holy Ghost has not been committed, "unless<sup>1</sup> now, after thou hast received conviction that the Lord Jesus is the only Saviour of the world, thou shouldst wickedly and despitefully turn thyself from Him, and conclude He is not to be trusted for life, and so crucify Him for a cheat afresh. This, I must confess, will bring a man under the black rod and set him in danger of eternal damnation. This is trampling under foot the Son of God, and counting His blood an unholy thing". Towards the close of the same treatise, designed as a comfort for despairing souls, Bunyan propounds the following test "Hast<sup>2</sup> thou committed it (the unpardonable sin)? Nay, I know thou hast not, if thou wouldst be saved by Christ. Yea, it is impossible that thou shouldst have done it, if indeed thou wouldst be saved by Him." ... "He<sup>3</sup> that comes to Christ for life has not, cannot have sinned that sin for which there is no forgiveness." Elsewhere we find the following:- "Nor<sup>3</sup> is there any sin but what is pardonable committed by /

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1. ibid. p. 89.
  2. ibid. p. 103.
  3. ibid. p. 102.
  4. ibid. p. 182.

by those that have chosen Jesus Christ to be their advocate". Persistent rejection of Christ is therefore the hopeless sin. God will pardon all sin but this, "nor<sup>1</sup> is that one unpardonable otherwise, but because the Saviour that would save them is rejected and put away. Jacob's ladder: Christ is Jacob's ladder that reacheth up to heaven; and he that refuseth to go by this ladder thither, will scarcely by other means get up so high". Elsewhere Bunyan points out that it is a favourite snare of the Tempter to suggest to doubting souls that they have committed the unpardonable sin. "There<sup>2</sup> is a sin unto death (1. Jn. 5:16) and he (Satan) can tell how to labour by argument and sleight of speech to make our transgressions not only to border upon, but to appear in the hue, shape and figure of that, and thereto make his objection against our salvation". The devil is fond of using the argument of the wrath of Christ against sin as a weapon to destroy the struggling Christian's faith and hope.

Bunyan's treatment of this difficult theme is eminently reasonable and helpful. He shows that the "unpardonableness" referred to is not arbitrary, but rooted /

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1. *ibid.* p. 103.  
 2. *ibid.* p. 185.

rooted in the nature of things. The term "unpardonable sin" admittedly conveys a false impression. It gives rise to the notion that there is a mysterious offence for which there is no forgiveness. It suggests a limitation of the mercy of God. It requires to be pointed out that this 'sin' is not a single act or even series of acts but a state of sinfulness. It is that condition into which men bring themselves by persistent choice of the darkness in preference to the light, that state in which men voluntarily and obstinately exclude themselves from the blessings of salvation. Unbelief is the fatal sin, the fatal state. "I see<sup>1</sup> now", says Bunyan, speaking for a lost soul, "I see now that there are abundance in glory as bad as I have been: but they were saved by faith, and I am damned by unbelief". Such a state, so long as it is maintained, so long as there is no desire to escape from it, is manifestly incompatible and inconsistent with the acceptance of the blessings of the gospel. Such a state, ex hypothesi, cannot receive the pardon which it does not desire. Such a state, which may supervene upon a long career /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p..86.

career of carelessness and disobedience, is by far the heaviest penalty of sin in the world that now is.

We pass now to the second main division of the consequences of sin - those, namely, which are associated with the hereafter. Bunyan, as we have seen, by no means ignores the penalties inflicted upon sin in the present life. He acknowledges that, in many cases, they are disastrous and overwhelming. But, even at their worst, they are to him unworthy for a moment to be compared with the wrath to come. The one stands to the other as a drop in the bucket to the illimitable ocean. All the other punishments of sin are overshadowed and eclipsed by those reserved for the sinner beyond the grave. The culmination and the crown of the consequences of his evil-doing await the offender in the hereafter. Bunyan claims to hold the unequivocal support of Scripture in thus laying the emphasis upon the future, rather than upon the present, penalties of sin. In his "Treatise on the Fear of God" which dates (1679) from the middle period of his literary and evangelical activity he thus refers to "the state of sinners in another world":- "That<sup>1</sup> is it unto which the whole /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 443.

whole Bible bendeth itself, either more immediately or more mediately. All its doctrines, counsels, encouragements, threatenings and judgments have a look, one way or other, upon us, with respect to the next world, which will be our last state, because it will be to us a state eternal." "The Life and Death of Mr Badman" is intended to give a powerful impression of the future punishment of sin. To all appearance, in spite of his flagrant sinfulness, he escaped comparatively scatheless through the life that now is. He was one of those to whom the text is applicable:- 'They that tempt God are delivered, and they that work wickedness are set up' (Mal. 3:15) But that only means that "they"<sup>1</sup> are reserved to the day of wrath; and then, for their wickedness, God will repay them to their faces ... That is, ordinarily, they escape God's hand in this life, save only a few examples are made that others may be cautioned and take warning thereby. But at the day of judgment they must be rebuked for their evil with the lashes of devouring fire."

In our time, as has often been remarked, the pendulum /

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1. Offor. Vol. III. p. 620.



pendulum has swung to the other side. Hell no longer holds its place of pre-eminence, at least in popular theological teaching. Where the consequences of sin are presented, it is those which are manifest in the present life upon which the preacher prefers to dwell. Science has taught us that, what is sown in vice is often reaped in loathesome disease of body and in shattering disablement of mind. The ruinous consequences of wrong-doing in the present life have been brought into clearer light, and for various reasons the others have been permitted to rest in vague obscurity. Ours is a softer, more sentimental age. Following upon a widespread diminution of the sense of the enormity of sin there has naturally ensued a loss of belief in the gravity of sin's consequences. We take a less serious view of sin, and therefore a less serious view of its consequences. Bunyan expatiates largely and freely upon the unspeakable torments of the lost. In picturing these he strains to the utmost the resources of his flexible vocabulary and his vivid imagination. But he never, for a moment, suggests that the punishment, terrific though it is, exceeds the crime. Such a thought he would instantaneously repudiate as blasphemous /

blasphemous. Sin to him was such a monstrosity that he had no doubt whatever that it merited hell.

Bunyan's doctrine of hell is characteristic of the Puritan and Reformed theology of his era. It is much in evidence, for instance, in Doddridge's classic. "The<sup>1</sup> Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul". It is tersely set forth in the following Question and Answer from the Larger Catechism of the Assembly Divines (Q. 28). "What are the punishments of sin in the world to come? The punishments of sin in the world to come are everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell-fire for ever". In this matter Bunyan himself was certainly not guilty of prophesying smooth things. In his earlier days, in particular, he cannot be charged with toning down the fiery colours of the grim Puritan message. The tendency with him was all in the other direction, as witness one of his first works, the promise of whose awesome title - "A few Sighs from Hell, or the Groans of a Damned Soul" is amply fulfilled by its terrifying contents. He preaches hell-fire with a passionate earnestness and a consuming conviction unequalled even among /

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1. e.g. p. 89 sqq.

among his contemporaries. It is manifest that he was very far from trifling with this awful doctrine. He took it seriously. He never questioned it, nor cavilled at it. It is little to say that he had no difficulty in believing it, for he found that there was something within him which instinctively hailed it as just and true, he found that to it his conscience and his heart said Amen. Hell was to him no mere vague and nebulous theory; it was a terrific reality. It was the reverse side of the coin whose obverse was sin. Among Bunyan's eminent qualities of mind and soul it may seem strange to place what we may call his sense of hell, but it is the simple truth that we know not any who surpass him here.

Bunyan teaches that hell is both a place and a state. We take the following from his "Instruction<sup>1</sup> for the Ignorant":- Q. What is hell? A. It is a place and a state most fearful. Q. Why do you call it a place? A. Because in hell shall all the damned be confined as in a prison, in their chains of darkness for ever. Q. What (kind of) a place is hell? A. It is a dark bottomless burning lake of fire, large enough to hold all that perish. Q. /

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1. Offor. Vol. II. p. 678.

Q. What do you mean when you say it is a fearful state?

A. I mean, that it is the lot of those that are cast in thither to be tormented in most fearful manner, to wit,

with wrath and fiery indignation. Q. In what parts shall

they be thus fearfully tormented? A. In body and soul:

for hell-fire shall kindle upon both beyond what can now be thought". Bunyan's view of hell, therefore, appears

to be a combination, which some may consider incongruous, of the material and the spiritual. He thought of it as

a place of torment for body as well as soul. Modern

theology, so far as it retains hell, regards it as a state of spiritual torment, of the nature of remorse or despair.

According to Bunyan, the pains of hell are partly bodily and partly spiritual, as is evidenced by the following

quotation from the "Life and Death of Mr Badman":-

"There<sup>1</sup> is no man, I think, that is sensible of the worth of one soul, but must, when he hears of the death of an unconverted man, be stricken with sorrow and grief: because .... that man's state is such that he has a sensible being for ever. For it is sense that makes the punishment heavy / ,

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1. Offor. Vol. III. p. 596.

heavy. But yet sense is not all that the damned have, they have sense and reason too; so then, as sense receiveth punishment with sorrow, because it feels and bleeds under the same, so by reason, and the exercise thereof, in the midst of torment, all present affliction is aggravated and that in three manner of ways". These, Bunyan goes on to say, are (1) Reason finds that the cause of its torment is "that base and filthy thing, sin". (2) Reason asks 'how long?', and receives the answer, 'for ever', and (3) Reason considers what it has lost. "I have lost communion with God, Christ, saints and angels and a share in heaven and eternal life, and this also must greaten the misery of poor damned souls". To Bunyan hell means the most exquisite torment of body and soul for ever. "This<sup>1</sup> word HELL gives a very dreadful sound ... But if the very name of hell is so dreadful, what is the place itself, and what are the punishments that are there inflicted, and that without the least intermission, upon the souls of damned men, for ever and ever".

Bunyan's doctrine of hell is based upon a definite theory of the nature and state of body as well as of soul in the hereafter. His view which is in harmony with the orthodox Reformed position he thus sets forth:- The body<sup>2</sup> is /

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1. Offor. Vol. III p. 596.

2. Offor Vol. I. p. ;33 cf. also II p. 677.

is "the house for the soul in this world ... when the day of death and dissolution is come, the body (of the impenitent sinner) is spared, while the soul is tormented in utterable unutterable torment in hell ... At the day of judgment ... body and soul shall be re-united, or joined together again, and shall then together partake of that recompence for their wickedness which is meet." He even holds that "the body<sup>1</sup> will receive its senses again" and will thus be exposed to all the pain of which the senses are capable. He is a pronounced believer in the unity of soul and body in the human personality. At death, indeed, this partnership suffers interruption but this dissolution is not permanent. Body and soul are re-united at the day of judgment, and the body shares the fate of the soul. "The body<sup>2</sup> is punished by the effects, or by those influences that the soul in its torments has upon the body, by virtue of that great oneness and union that is between them" ... "The body<sup>3</sup> being a vessel to hold the soul that is thus possessed with the wrath of God, must needs itself be affected and tormented with that torment because of its union with the body <sup>(? soul)</sup> ~~and soul~~."

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1. Ofor. Vol. I. p. 135.

2. *ibid.* p. 133.

3, *ibid.* p. 134.

The wrath of God is, however, primarily directed against the soul inasmuch as the soul was the agent of sin, and the body only its instrument. "So then<sup>1</sup> the soul is the seat and receiver of wrath even as it was the receiver and seat of sin; here then is sin and wrath upon the soul, the soul in the body, and so soul and body tormented in hell-fire." The punishment of the body is "inferior to that of the soul because nothing can be so hot, so tormenting, so intolerably insupportable as the quickest apprehensions of, and the immediate sinking under, that guilt and indignation that is proportionable to the offence" ... "Suppose the fire wherewith the body is tormented in hell should be seven times hotter than any of our fire .. yet it must, suppose it be created fire, be infinitely short as to tormenting operations, of the unspeakable wrath of God when in the heat thereof He applieth it to, and doth punish the soul for sin in hell therewith."

A careful study of Bunyan's writings discloses the fact that his view of hell is at bottom spiritual. For him indeed it represents the last word in physical torment, but this latter is far outweighed by its spiritual anguish.

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1. *ibid.* p. 134.

The pains of hell, in their intensity and perpetuity, are a most prominent feature in his teaching, bulking largely even in his later works. Again and again he returns to this theme, unspeakably impressed by its dread reality, employing the utmost resources of his vocabulary and the highest flights of his imagination, and confessing, when all is said and done, their utter inadequacy. "To present you with emblems of tormented spirits or to draw before your eyes the picture of hell are things too light for so ponderous a subject as this; nor can any man frame or invent words, be they never so deep and profound, sufficient to the life to set out the torments of hell. All the expressions of fire, brimstone, the lake of fire, a fiery furnace, the bottomless pit and a hundred more to boot are all too short to set forth the miseries of those that shall be damned souls . . . . We hear it thunder, we see it lighten, yea, eclipses, comets and blazing stars are all subject to smite us with terror . . . But alas! what are these? mere fleabittings, nay not so bad, when compared with the torments of hell. Guilt and despair, what are they? Who understands them to perfection? The ireful /

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1. Offor Vol.I. pp. 147-8.



ireful looks of an infinite majesty, what mortal in the land of the living can tell us to the full, how dismal and breaking to the soul of man it is . . . Oh! words are wanting, thoughts are wanting, imagination and fancy are poor things here; hell is another kind of place and state than any alive can think.."

In spite of his acknowledgment that words fail him, Bunyan by no means rejects their assistance altogether, but, believing strongly in what he calls "the<sup>1</sup> use of terror", he employs his powerful verbal weapons as effectively as in him lies. Many a time he enlarges in his characteristically vivid and picturesque fashion upon the intensity of the pains of hell. "Fire<sup>2</sup> is that which of all things is the most insufferable and insupportable. Wherefore by fire is shewed the grievous state of the ungodly, after judgment. Who can eat fire, drink fire and lie down in the midst of flames of fire? Yet that must the wicked do. Again, not only fire, but everlasting fire". "Set<sup>3</sup> the case you should take a man, and tie him to a stake and with red-hot pincers, pinch off his flesh /

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1. *ibid.* p. 148.

2. *ibid.* II. p. 126.

3. *ibid.* III. p. 693-4.

flesh by little pieces for two or three years together, and at last when the poor man cries out for ease and help, the tormentors answer, Nay, but, 'beside all this', you must be handled worse. We will serve you thus these 20 years together, and after that we will fill your mangled body full of scalding lead, or run you through with a red-hot spit - would not this be lamentable? Yet this is but a flea-biting to the sorrows of those that go to hell; for if a man were served so, there would, ere it were long, be an end of him. But he that goes to hell shall suffer ten thousand times worse torments than these, and yet shall never be quite dead under them. There they shall be ever whining, pining, weeping, mourning, ever tormented without ease. If the biggest devil in hell might pull thee all to pieces, and rend thee small as dust, and dissolve thee into nothing, thou wouldest count this a mercy. But here thou must lie and fry, scorch and broil and burn for ever." "It<sup>1</sup> is said concerning men at the downfall of Babylon, that they shall be amazed one at another, for 'their faces shall be as flames' (Is. XIII: 8.) And what if one should say, that even as it is with a house set on fire

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 136.

fire within, where the flame ascends out at the chimneys, out at the windows, and the smoke out at every chink and crevice it can find, so it will be with the damned in hell. That soul will breathe hell fire and smoke, and coals will seem to hang upon its burning lips; yea the face, eyes, and ears will seem all to be chimneys and vents for the flame and smoke of the burning which God by His breath hath kindled therein, and upon them, which will be beheld one in another, to the great torment and distress of each other". "They (the reprobate) will now see what hell is, and what damnation in hell is, more clear than ever. They will also see how the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. O the sight of the burning fiery furnace, which is prepared for the devil and his angels! ... Now they will see what the meaning of such words as these are hell-fire, everlasting fire, devouring fire, fire that never shall be quenched. Now they will see what for ever means, what eternity means; now they will see what this word means, 'The bottomless pit'; now they will hear roaring of sinners in this place, howling in that, some crying to the mountains to fall upon them, and others to the rocks to cover /

cover them".

The lurid realism of passages such as these which we have quoted above, tends to obscure the fundamental spirituality of Bunyan's doctrine of hell. Yet he is careful to insist emphatically and frequently that the heaviest and the essential punishment of sin in the hereafter is mental and spiritual. Despair, he describes as "the<sup>1</sup> most twinging stripe of hell". The physical pains of hell, if they may be so described, are intensely aggravated by the operation of the understanding, the memory and the imagination. Even the present state of the devil is more tolerable, according to Bunyan, than that of damned souls. The devil "finds<sup>2</sup> some diversion to his trembling mind", "something to sport and refresh himself withal", "some small crumbs of minutes of forgetfulness of his own present misery" in "busily employing himself against the gospel and its professors". But condemned souls can do nothing but "sit down by" their loss; they are shut up to the tortures of self-condemnation. "This will set all the passions of the soul save love, for that I think will be stark dead, all in a rage, all in a self-tormenting /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 120.

2. ibid. p. 121.

tormenting fire". They will not, it is to be noted, condemn God; they will condemn themselves. "They shall justify God and lay the fault upon themselves, concluding that it was sin with which their souls did voluntarily work - yea, which their souls did suck in as sweet milk - that is the cause of this their torment". "You know there is nothing that will sooner put a man into, and manage his rage against himself than will a full conviction in his conscience that by his own only folly, and that against caution, and counsel and reason to the contrary, he hath brought himself into extreme distress and misery. But how much more will it make the fire burn when he shall see all this to come upon him for a toy, for a bauble, for a thing that is worse than nothing". One of the chief torments of hell is the memory of an "ill-spent life". "Thou<sup>1</sup> shalt have a scalding hot remembrance of all thy sinful thoughts, words, and actions, from the very first to the last of them that ever thou didst commit in thy life-time". "Every<sup>2</sup> touch that the understanding shall give to the memory will be as a touch of a red-hot iron, or like a draught of scalding lead poured down the throat".

Bunyan's /

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1. *ibid.* Vol. III. p. 690.

2. *ibid.* Vol. I. p. 120.

Bunyan's essentially spiritual view of hell is further made clear in the following:- "The torments<sup>1</sup> of hell stand much, if not in the greatest part of them, in those deep thoughts and apprehensions which souls in the next world will have of the nature and occasions of sin; of God and of separation from Him; of the eternity of those miseries, and of the utter impossibility of their help, ease or deliverance for ever". "Here<sup>2</sup> (in this world) man can sometimes think on their sins with delight, but there with unspeakable torment; for that I understand to be the fire that Christ speaketh of, which never shall be quenched". "Sin<sup>3</sup> in the general of it is the sting of hell, for there would be no such thing as torment even there, were it not that sin is there with sinners." "Take<sup>4</sup> holiness away out of heaven, and what is heaven? I had rather be in hell, were there none but holy ones there, than be in heaven itself with the children of iniquity". In other words, Bunyan holds the sound and rational position that the essence of heaven is holiness and that the essence of hell is sin. It is sin that makes /

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1. *ibid.* p. 118.

2. *Offor.* Vol. III. p. 683.

3. *ibid.* Vol. I. p. 149.

4. *ibid.* p. 149.

makes hell. Hell itself would not be hell without sin. In hell we find sin raised, so to speak, to its highest power and pushed to its extremest consequences. Bunyan's treatise bearing the grim title "A few Sighs from Hell, or The Groans of a Damned Soul" is a telling exposition of the Parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19-31.). The apparent concern of Dives in hell for the welfare of his five brethren still on earth raises an interesting discussion as to the motives prompting this commendable solicitude. Bunyan holds that these were purely selfish, Dives being aware that his own torments would be aggravated if his brethren joined him in hell. "I<sup>1</sup> do believe", he says, "that there is scarce so much love in any of the damned in hell as really to desire the salvation of any". He teaches, logically enough, that in hell, the place and state of hopeless sin, all love is utterly dead and all potentiality of goodness for ever extinct.

The reasonableness of Bunyan's view of future punishment is further shown by his belief in the existence of graded penalties. "As<sup>2</sup> one star - that is, as one saint - differeth from another in heaven; so one damned soul shall /

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1. ibid. Vol. III. p. 697.

2. ibid. Vol. II. p. 128.

shall differ from another in hell. It is so among the devils themselves: they are some worse than others ... Can it be imagined that Judas should have no more torment ... than others who never came near his wickedness by ten thousand degrees?" He recognises that a terrible reckoning awaits those who are guilty of misleading others. "Here<sup>1</sup> will be damnation upon damnation, damned for thy own sins, and damned for thy being a partaker with others in their sins; and damned for being guilty of the damnation of others." There are men who will have "whole towns and "whole cities" to answer for. Specially grave is the responsibility of preachers and pastors, and specially heavy will be their punishment if found faithless. "Ah<sup>2</sup> friend, I tell thee, thou hast taken in hand to preach to the people, it may be thou hast taken in hand thou canst not tell what. Will it not grieve thee to see thy whole parish come bellowing after thee to hell, crying out, This we may thank thee for, this is long of thee, thou didst not teach us the truth; thou didst lead us away with fables, thou wast afraid to tell us of our sins, lest we should not put meat fast enough in thy mouth ... (thou) wast not contented, /

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1. *ibid.* Vol. III p. 699.

2. *Offor.* Vol. III.p. 699.



contented, blind guide as thou wert, to fall into the ditch thyself, but hast also led us thither with thee".

Bunyan's doctrine of future punishment contains the elements of intensity and perpetuity. We now pass to the second of these. There is ample evidence that he teaches that the punishment of sin in the hereafter is unending and everlasting. This he held to be the doctrine of Scripture. The tortures of the damned will never be mitigated nor relieved one whit throughout all eternity. There is no hope for them either by way of annihilation or by way of restoration. "Our<sup>1</sup> next state must be eternal, either eternal glory or eternal fire". "Now tell the stars, now tell the drops of the sea, and now tell the blades of grass that are spread upon the face of all the earth, if thou canst; and yet sooner mayest thou do this than count the thousands of millions of thousands of years that a damned soul shall lie in hell. Suppose every star that is now in the firmament was to burn, by himself, one by one, a thousand years apiece, would it not be a long time before the last of them was burned out? And yet sooner might that be done than the damned soul be /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 443.

be at the end of punishment". "Here<sup>1</sup> thou mayest lie and fry, scorch and broil and burn for ever". The following occurs in the exposition of the Parable of Dives and Lazarus already referred to:- I would<sup>2</sup> be glad of the least mercy, ... the least comfort though it be but one drop of cold water on the tip of his finger ... But, mark, he is not permitted to have so much as one drop... This signifies that they that fall short of Christ shall be tormented even as long as eternity lasteth, and shall not have so much as the least ease, no, not so long as while a man may turn himself round, not so much as to swallow his spittle, not a drop of cold water." The following Question and Answer from His "Instruction for the Ignorant" is interesting as furnishing some at least of Bunyan's proof texts for the doctrine of everlasting punishment. "Q. How long<sup>3</sup> shall they be in this condition? 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment' (Matt. 25: 46). 'And the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night' (Rev. 14:11). For 'They shall be punished with everlasting /

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1. Ibid. III. p. 694.

2. Ibid. p. 688.

3. Offor. Vol. II. p. 678.

everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power' (2. Thess. 1:9). Even his treatise with the winsome title, "Come and welcome to Jesus Christ", based on John 6:37 and dating from the days of the plenitude of his power, strikes the note of terror. It contains a lengthy and fearsome exposition of the words 'cast out', which is thus summed up:- "Oh; these<sup>1</sup> three words! Everlasting punishment! Eternal damnation! and, For ever and ever! How will they gnaw and eat up all the expectation of the end of the misery of the cast-away sinners". The damned are in the position of a condemned man without any prospect of reprieve.<sup>2</sup> Over the portals of hell might be inscribed the legend, "Too late". "They<sup>3</sup> mourn too late, they repent too late, they pray too late". "Hell<sup>4</sup> is the place of untimely repentance" .. "It is too late" will be, in each thought, such a sting that, like a bow of steel, it will continually strike him through" .. "There<sup>5</sup> is a time coming wherein, though men shall both cry and pray, yet they are like to have no mercy at the hands of God" .. "Thou<sup>6</sup> art now deprived of a being in the /

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1. ibid. Vol. I. p. 273.
  2. ibid. p. 139.
  3. ibid. p. 138.
  4. ibid. pp. 230-1.
  5. ibid. Vol..III. p. 687.
  6. ibid. p. 693.

the world. thou art deprived of hearing the gospel ...  
repentance now will do thee no good."

Bunyan pictures the lost in hell as "vehemently<sup>1</sup>  
desiring to be annihilated to nothing", but in vain.  
He seeks repeatedly to make it quite clear that there is  
no deliverance that way. "Could<sup>2</sup> the soul be annihilated  
or brought to nothing, how happy would it count itself but  
it sees that it may not be". "Everlasting burning ....  
will not make the soul extinct". This is his answer to  
the question why the bottomless pit is so called. I  
think<sup>3</sup> it is not so proper to say the soul that is damned  
for sin doth bear these things; as to say it doth ever  
sink under them; and therefore their place of torment is  
called the bottomless pit, because they are ever sinking,  
and shall never come, where they will find any stay". He  
certainly does not expound everlasting death to mean that  
sinners and their sins pass out of existence in the de-  
vouring flames. "Have not I told thee that there is no  
such thing as ceasing to be: that the damned shall never  
be burnt out of hell".

The other conceivable door of escape is also, on  
Bunyan's /

1. *ibid.* Vol. II. p. 127.
2. *ibid.* Vol. III. p. 685,
3. *ibid.* Vol I. p. 118.

Bunyan's view, for ever barred and closed. In his theology there is no room for purgatory.- "no<sup>1</sup> third place" alongside heaven and hell. These are the two sharply defined alternatives, and no via media is admissible. Here again his position is that of the orthodox Reformed divines. The doctrine of the "larger hope" is a comparatively modern development. But there can be no doubt that Bunyan would have rejected it as unscriptural and as incompatible with his view of the enormity of sin. "Sin"<sup>2</sup> he declares, "is such a thing, that it can never be burned out of the soul and body of a damned sinner". It must ever be remembered that his doctrine of eternal punishment terrific though it be, is but the logical outcome of his doctrine of the extreme gravity and heinousness of sin. In his eyes the nature of sin is such that its consequences cannot but be appalling. These latter draw attention to the eternal and unutterable offensiveness and horror of the cause from which they proceed. John Galt's "Annals of the Parish" affords us some glimpses of Scottish theology about a century and a quarter after Bunyan's prime. In those days the doctrine of Universal Restoration had become more vocal and explicit. In one passage the /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 125.  
 2. Ibid. p. 148.

the Parish Minister is represented as telling that "an<sup>1</sup> interloper" "more dangerous than the Pope of Rome himself" had entered the Parish. This was one who "came to teach the flagrant heresy of Universal Redemption, a most consolatory doctrine to the sinner that is loth to repent and who loves to troll his iniquity like a sweet morsel under his tongue". The plausible theory was therefore rejected "as a bribe to commit sin, the wickedest mortal according to it, being only liable to a few thousand years, more or less, of suffering, which, compared with eternity was but a momentary pang". To this Bunyan would certainly have subscribed. Expositors in our day are not certain that his doctrine of eternal punishment is, in all points Scriptural, though there are passages in Holy Writ which, at first sight, appear to lend to it powerful support. But, even assuming that the Scriptural evidence may not bear out to the full Bunyan's interpretation, we must acknowledge that the moral results of tampering with the doctrine of the gravity of sin's punishment may well be disastrous. Bunyan's doctrine of everlasting punishment is defensible, at least on the ground that it seeks to do full /

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1. Annals of the Parish by John Galt: Everyman's Library pp. 146-7.

full justice to the heinousness of sin.

While, however, acknowledging the value of Bunyan's teaching on the penalties of sin in the hereafter, we must admit that here and there we encounter certain features and statements which are distasteful and repugnant in no small degree. For example, the conclusion of his "Instruction for the Ignorant" strikes a note which cannot but be regarded as unworthy and regrettable and wholly out of harmony with true Christian feeling:- "Consider<sup>1</sup> how sweet the thought of salvation will be to thee when thou seest thyself in heaven, whilst others are roaring in hell". We are also told elsewhere that "when<sup>2</sup> the godly think of hell, it will increase their comfort". That too is an unfortunate utterance to which exception must be taken. Elsewhere he pictures "father<sup>3</sup>, mother and friends" in the world beyond the grave "rejecting", "slighting", and "turning their backs upon" their condemned and ruined kinsfolk. That surely is contrary both to the fundamental instincts of human nature and to the spirit of Christianity. Bunyan, further, makes frequent use of the passage in the Proverbs (I: 24 sqq) in which Wisdom is /

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1. Offor. Vol. II. p. 690.
  2. Vol. II. p. 127.
  3. Vol. III. p. 705.

is represented as laughing at the sinner's calamity."

This attitude he applies to the heavenly Father and to the Son. "Mark<sup>1</sup> you how many pinching expressions the Lord Jesus Christ doth threaten the refusing sinner with..

.. I will laugh at him, I will mock at him ... He that can find in his heart to turn his back upon Jesus Christ now, shall have the back turned upon him hereafter, when he may cry and pray for mercy, and yet go without it" Contrast the foregoing with Dr. Alexander Smellie's exposition of the same Scripture passage:- "Will<sup>2</sup> Jesus ever laugh in the Day of anyone's calamity? Will he ever mock in the hour of anyone's fear when the whirlwind of distress and anguish overwhelms the soul? Will there be victory, gladness for His heart in the rout and ruin of His enemies at last? No, no; it will be the sharpest and sorrowfullest of pains to Him to say, Depart from me". These words from the pen of a scholarly modern divine who was also a lover of the old paths, furnish clear evidence that Reformed Theology has made substantial progress since the days of Bunyan. His spiritual genius notwithstanding, there are crudities in Bunyan which shock our sense /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 141.

2. "In the Hour of Silence" London 1899 p. 283.



sense of what is fitting and true. With all his insight there are times when we feel that he fails to interpret the mind of Christ". There are occasions when we must part company with him and follow a more helpful guide. Though our fundamental Christian convictions may be identical with his, we are children of a different age, and there are certain modes of thought and expression, peculiar to his age, which we have definitely outgrown.

Our examination of Bunyan's doctrine of hell may be fittingly closed by a reference to the practical uses which he found it to serve, and of which he was not slow to avail himself. Everlasting punishment was a characteristic note of the Reformed and Puritan theology of his time, and he preached it with an emphasis and a fervour surpassed by none. In his own spiritual experience as well as in his writings the fear of hell was a dominant and compelling motive. He had first felt in his own heart and conscience the terror with which he sought to inspire others. It was the conviction of the impending overthrow of the City of Destruction and his passionate eagerness to flee from the wrath to come that launched Christian forth upon his pilgrimage. To Bunyan the Christian /

Christian life was, in large measure, a flight from sin and its consequences. The awakened sinner, on his view, thinks less of what he is flying to, than of what he is flying from. He probably intends the experience of Christian to be regarded as normal and typical, and in Christian's heart at first there was very little room for any other motive but fear. Whether normal or not, Christian's experience was Bunyan's own, and therefore the only experience which he could commend and prescribe with full confidence to others. He, therefore, believed firmly in what he called "the<sup>1</sup> argument of terror" and he made frequent and most effective use of it. He believed in the wholesomeness of a sound conviction of sin. "This soul<sup>2</sup> is for certain to go to hell if thou shalt be a sligher of convictions", and in "convictions" as he understood them, fear is a powerful and indispensable ingredient.

All his mental and spiritual resources are enlisted in the effort to drive home to the souls of his hearers and readers the fear of hell as a motive to seek salvation. To him it was an essential part of his work to pluck brands out /

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1. Offor. Vol. II. p. 107.
  2. Ibid. Vol. I. p. 496.

out of the fire. This necessity was ever laid upon him. Such appeals as the following date not only from the early days when he was a "hot gospeller", but are to be found even in his later writings:- "Sinner<sup>1</sup>, awake; yea, I say unto thee, awake! Sin lieth at thy door, and God's axe lieth at thy root, and hell-fire is right underneath thee. I say again, awake! .... What sayest thou now, sinner? Canst thou drink hell-fire? Will the wrath of God be a pleasant dish to thy taste? This must be thine every day's meat and drink in hell, sinner .... Be often thinking of them that are in hell past all mercy". For better or for worse, this kind of appeal is seldom heard now, but it is typical of Bunyan all through his ministry. Other examples follow. "Sinner<sup>2</sup>, consider this ... If thou hast a soul, it concerns thee; if there be a hell, it concerns thee; and if there be a god that can and will punish the soul for sin everlastingly in hell, it concerns thee" ... "What<sup>3</sup> more abominable than sin? What more insupportable than the dreadful wrath of an angry god? And what more fearful than the bottomless pit of hell? I say, what more fearful than to be tormented there for ever /

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1. Ibid. Vol. I. p. 386.
  2. Offor. Vol. I. p. 124-5.
  3. Ibid. p. 237.

ever with the devil and his angels?" This latter, be it noted, is contained in a treatise entitled, "Saved by Grace". The alternative before every human soul is thus grimly and epigrammatically expressed, "Turn<sup>1</sup> or burn, says God". "Remember", we are solemnly warned, "remember<sup>2</sup> that thou hangest over hell by the weak thread of an uncertain life". To the same effect is the following couched in the proverbial form beloved of Bunyan:- "Thou<sup>3</sup> are brewing that in this life which thou ~~most~~ certainly drink". Those who refuse to take heed are said, with a touch of pictorial and imaginative genius, to "lie<sup>4</sup> like the smith's dog at the foot of the anvil, though the fire-sparks fly in his face".

Who, then, on Bunyan's view, are liable to an eternity of woe? On this point he is quite definite and explicit. "All<sup>5</sup> the ungodly that live and die in their sins, as soon as ever they depart this life, do descend into hell". It is the fate and condition of "those<sup>6</sup> who go out of the world without an interest in the Son of God". "If<sup>7</sup> thou depart unconverted and not born again, thou hadst /

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1. *ibid.* Vol. I. p. 351.
  2. *ibid.* Vol. III. p. 683.
  3. *ibid.* Vol. III. p. 701.
  4. *ibid.* Vol. III. p. 715.
  5. *ibid.* p. 681.
  6. *ibid.* p. 683.
  7. *ibid.* p. 686.

hadst better have been smothered the first hour thou wast born". Hell is the portion of those who "fall"<sup>1</sup> short of Christ". "Always"<sup>2</sup> this is certain, they (the devils) never miss of the soul if it do die out of the Lord Jesus Christ, but do hale it away to prison, there to be tormented and reserved until that great and general day of judgment, at which day they must, body and soul, receive a final sentence from the righteous Judge, and from that time be shut out from the presence of God into everlasting woe and distress". The terms of salvation are more fully and elaborately stated in the following:- "Tell"<sup>3</sup> them plainly that, unless they leave their sins and (self) righteousness too, and close in with a naked Jesus Christ, His blood and merits, and what He hath done and is now doing for sinners, they cannot be saved". In short, Bunyan uses the fear of hell as a motive to "close"<sup>4</sup> in savingly with the Lord Jesus Christ and lay hold on what He hath done and is doing in His own person for sinners".

In his "Instruction for the Ignorant" Bunyan gives his answer to the following interesting question. "Why"<sup>5</sup> might /

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1. *ibid.* p. 688.
  2. *ibid.* p. 680.
  3. *Offor.* Vol. III. p. 700.
  4. *Ibid.* p. 681.
  5. *Ibid.* Vol. II. p. 678.

might not the ungodly be punished with this punishment in this world, that we might have seen it and believe?" It might be argued, with some show of plausibility, that the results would be more satisfactory if the penalties of sin were more fully in evidence in the world that now is.

Why reserve its direst consequences for the hopeless state beyond the grave? Bunyan has his answer ready for those who would take it upon them to impugn thus the wisdom of the Divine ordinances. He points out first that "if the ungodly should with punishment have been rewarded in this world, it would in all probability have overthrown the whole order that God hath settled here among men". Spectators could not have endured the awful scene. He does not venture to suggest that there might even be a revolt against God, but he does indicate that human sensibility could not sustain the sight of loved ones in torture.

His second reason is on the whole much more satisfactory and may well be left to stand by itself as the answer to the question "Faith is not to be wrought by looking into hell, and seeing the damned tormented before our eyes, but 'by hearing the word of God'". For he that shall not believe Moses and the prophets, will not be persuaded should /

should one come from the dead, yea should one come to them in flames to persuade them".

Bunyan's doctrine of hell was clearly one of his profoundest convictions. There is every evidence that he took seriously this article in the orthodox creed. "Suppose", he argues, "suppose<sup>1</sup> there be a hell in very deed; not that I do question it any more than I do whether there be a sun to shine", what then? Such a belief, if genuine, is bound to exert a tremendous influence on those who hold it. There can be no doubt that belief in hell contributed greatly to make Bunyan the man he was. Remove this dominant feature from his lineaments and he becomes unrecognizable, he loses his identity. There can be no doubt that the silent withdrawal of this dogma from the popular theology of the present day has produced a great lacuna. Tacitly the stern, old view has been dropped, but this is by no means all clear gain. With it there has tended to disappear that sense of urgency which is vital to the well-being and activity of the soul. If we must surrender the doctrine of everlasting punishment we need to find a substitute equally effective. This is one of the problems of the present-day preacher. It /

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1. *ibid.* III. p. 592.

It may help him if he indicates as tellingly as he can, the good that the careless are missing by their indulgence in sin. Bunyan lived in an age when the fear of hell was still a motive that could be appealed to with fruitful results. In the following passage he speaks with his accustomed conviction and passion on the dread reality of hell and deplores the ill effects of disbelief in a hereafter of woe:- "Suppose<sup>1</sup> that instead of all these judgments, this sin (adultery) had attending of it all the felicities of this life, and no bitterness, shame or disgrace mixed with it, yet one hour in hell will spoil all. Oh! this hell, hell-fire, damnation in hell, it is such an inconceivable punishment that, were it but thoroughly believed, it would nip this sin with others in the head. But here is the mischief, those that give themselves up to these things do so harden themselves in unbelief and atheism about the things, the punishments that God hath threatened to inflict upon the committers of them, that at last they arrive to an almost absolute and firm belief that there is no judgment to come hereafter; else they would not, they could not, no not attempt to commit this sin /

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1. Offor. Vol. III. p. 613.



sin by such abominable language as some do".

Bunyan is convinced that belief in hell has most salutary uses not only at the beginning but at every stage of the Christian life. The following is taken from one of his latest works, published posthumously and bearing the title "Christ a complete Saviour". "If<sup>1</sup> thou lovest thy soul, slight not the knowledge of hell, for that, with the law, are the spurs which Christ useth to prick souls forward to Himself withal. What is the cause that sinners can play so delightfully with sin? It is for that they forget there is a hell for them to descend into for their so doing, when they go out of this world. For here usually he gives our stop to a sinful course; we perceive that hell hath opened her mouth before us. Lest thou shouldst forget, I beseech thee, another time, to retain the knowledge of hell in thine understanding, and apply the burning-hot thoughts thereof to thy conscience; This is one way to make thee gather up thy heels, and mend thy pace in coming to Jesus Christ and to God the Father by him."

Bunyan's appeal to the motive of fear is manifestly open /

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1. Ibid. Vol. I. p. 220

open to criticism, but the objections directed against it, when carefully scrutinised, will for the most part be found to be cheap and unsubstantial. It is easy, for instance to charge his theory with selfishness, but this is to forget that there is such a thing as enlightened self-interest. He points out that impenitent sinners are to all intents and purposes "mad". "They<sup>1</sup> oppose themselves, they stand in their own light, they are against their own happiness" and yet "they count the most sober, the most godly, the most holy man, the mad one". Moreover, to level the charge of selfishness against one who suffered for his convictions as Bunyan did, is to be guilty of a contradiction in terms.

More serious is the objection that Bunyan fails to do justice to the supreme motive of love. But this too is less well-founded than would at first sight appear. He is quite capable of appreciating the loftiest and most spiritual of motives, and in such a passage as the following we find him insisting that sin should be hated for its own sake apart altogether from the fear of its consequences:-  
 "For<sup>2</sup> if in its own nature it be desirable to thy mind, and only /

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1. Offor. Vol. I. p. 230.  
 2: Vol. II. p. 516.

only therefore to be shunned for fear of the punishment that attends the commission of it, without doubt thou art none of them that do depart from it; all that thou dost is, thou shunnest the sin, not of abhorrence of the sin, but for fear of the punishment that attends it. Like the thief that yet refuseth to take away his neighbour's horse, not of hatred of theft, but for fear of the gallows". It is by no means correct to assert that even in his earliest writings no appeal is made to the motive of love. A convincing example of this may be taken from one of his first productions "A few Sighs from Hell" which for the most part is true to its lurid title. Towards the close of this treatise he enjoins in touching language the obedience which is prompted by love. "Knowing<sup>1</sup> that salvation is already obtained for him by the blood of that man Jesus Christ on the cross because he believes the Scriptures, therefore, mark I pray, therefore, I say, he labours to walk with his God in all well-pleasing and godliness, because the sweet power of the loves of Christ, which he feels in his soul by the Spirit, constrain him so to do (2. Cor V.: 14). .. "Mine obedience, say thou, I will endeavour /

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1. Vol. III: 722.

endeavour to have it free and cheerful, out of love to my Lord Jesus". It is significant that this treatise which is dedicated, so to speak, to fear, should end on the winsome note of love commending in its closing words, "an engaging<sup>1</sup> of the heart and soul to Jesus Christ, even to the giving up of thy whole man unto Him, to be ruled and governed by Him to His glory, and thy comfort, by the faith of the same Lord Jesus." This motive comes into clearer prominence in his later writings. According to a modern biographer<sup>2</sup> Bunyan found deliverance from his own protracted and tormenting doubts and fears when he discovered that it was in him to trust God implicitly and to serve and love God disinterestedly. Perfect love overcame slavish fear, but that is not to say that he ever outgrew that fear of the Lord which is clean, enduring for ever. He always retained a shuddering and horrified sense of the enormity of sin, which sense his increasing love would by no means diminish but rather augment. Even in his latest writings he never finds it safe to dispense with the element of fear. Hell was never eliminated from his thoughts /

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1. Offor. Vol. III. p. 724.

2. The Human story of John Bunyan by Gwilym O. Griffith, London. 1927 p. 156.

thoughts and convictions as long as he lived. He found that retention of the belief in hell is necessary and salutary even for the maturest and saintliest of Christians as long as they remain on earth.

CONCLUSION:-      VALUE.

CONCLUSION:- VALUE.

An attempt must now be made to present a concluding estimate of the permanent value of Bunyan's doctrine of sin. We proceed to gather up the threads of our investigation and to endeavour to weave them into a harmonious pattern.

It will be conceded on all hands that Bunyan is entitled to rank as a leading authority on the doctrine of sin. To this subject he devoted prolonged and unwearied thought and reflection. It early attracted, and it retained to the last his liveliest interest. It entered into his most intimate personal experience. His knowledge of the doctrine of sin, whatever its defects, was at least not cheaply bought. Its acquirement was purchased at the expense of sore, even agonizing mental and spiritual suffering. This first-hand knowledge was supplemented by a considerably wider course of reading and study than is generally placed to his credit. His remarkable knowledge of the contents of the English Bible constantly evokes the astonished admiration of those who peruse his pages. Moreover, his equipment as a theologian /

theologian is by no means to be despised. He had a firm grasp of the Calvinism in vogue in his day which he showed himself fully competent to expound and to defend.

Had Bunyan then any original contribution to make towards the elucidation of the doctrine of sin? Julius Müller, when faced with the question of the origin of evil, found it necessary to "step<sup>1</sup> beyond the region of the temporal" and to<sup>2</sup> "adopt the opinion of a self-decision lying on the other side of this earthly life." Did Bunyan, like Müller, attempt the revival of any ancient and unfamiliar theory? Did he propound any new and illuminating hypothesis? Did he diverge in any direction from current Calvinism? Did he suggest any new and fruitful line of thought? In short, what, if anything, is original in his doctrine of sin?

It may seem disappointing to be compelled to admit that no new theory is to be fathered upon Bunyan. There is no detail in the teaching of the Westminster Confession on the subject of sin to which we have reason to believe that he would have entered his dissent. He was not possessed with the Athenian craze for some new thing. He led /

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1. Müller. Vol. II. : p. 79.  
2. Ibid. p. 82.



led no open revolt against the dominant Calvinistic thought. He felt no inward dissatisfaction with it. He never questioned its truth, and its fidelity to Scriptural teaching.

What is characteristic in Bunyan's doctrine of sin is his constant emphasis upon its reality and gravity. This is no new message. It is in harmony with general Protestant and Puritan thought. But nowhere does it find more intense and poignant expression than in Bunyan. He stands for the heinousness and enormity of sin to which he will admit no palliation nor excuse.

Whatever be laid to his charge, he cannot be accused of underestimating sin. He has been fiercely attacked upon the opposite ground. His spiritual distresses have been diagnosed as conforming to a type "all<sup>1</sup> too familiar to asylum doctors". He has been viewed as an unmitigated egoist, the miserable victim of his own morbid hallucinations. But the truth is that he was much more God-centred than self-centred. Sin is heinous in his eyes because he looks at it steadily from the standpoint of God /

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1. Alfred Noyes. Article. "Bunyan: a Revaluation" in The Bookman, Oct. 1928.

God. The Psalmist's confession - "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned" - presents no difficulty to him. He thoroughly agrees with it, and accepts it as his own. He would expound its teaching with satisfaction and conviction. He is much more a God-intoxicated than a self-intoxicated man. His doctrine of sin has its roots not in any perverted egoism of his own but in his overmastering sense of God and His holiness.

In our day sin is viewed predominantly from the human standpoint. Herein lies the cause of much of the prevalent misunderstanding of Bunyan's spiritual distresses; his point of view is different from that which is almost universal among us. He begins with the ideal, and looks down from above on the yawning chasm which separates sinful mankind from the Divine holiness. His method is a priori and deductive, based upon Scriptural presuppositions; the other is a posteriori and inductive, starting from the facts of human nature as weighed in human balances. The inductive method is fashionable, not to say supreme in these days of scientific triumph. Anything savouring of the a priori or idealistic is liable to contemptuous dismissal as fanciful and illusory and without basis in fact. The times in which we live are the /

"the hour and power" of induction, but whatever be claimed on its behalf it cannot be defended as less selfish and less self-centred than its rival or rather complement. It is surely more selfish to leave God out of our calculations than to give Him the dominant place. An awakened consciousness of God would give us a sympathetic understanding of the reasonableness of Bunyan's view of sin. We can scarcely congratulate ourselves upon our weakened consciousness of sin if that be due to the fact that we have forgotten God. As Turretin points out we must be careful to estimate sin in "the balances of the sanctuary" (*statera sanctuarii*). All sins are grievous from the point of view of God. The distinction, beloved of the Roman Catholics between mortal sins and venial sins is inadmissible, because all sins are mortal and none are venial. We must guard ourselves against the insidious error of underestimating sin, and for this reason we must seek to view it from the true standpoint, the standpoint of God. "Qui<sup>1</sup> peccata extenuant, nec Dei majestatem, nec Legis justitiam, nec peccati foeditatem nec suam conditionem abjectissimam coram Deo, probe expendunt. Ut nulla /

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1. Turretin p. 661-2.

nulla parva est rebellio, nullum parvum laesae  
 majestatis crimen; ita exiguum non potest censeri  
 peccatum quod adversus optimum et maximum De<sup>u</sup>m adeoque  
 infinitum committitur ... Haec est statera sanctuarii  
 ad quam appendenda sunt peccata ut vera eorum gravitas  
 et reatus agnoscatur, non staterae dolosae et fallaces  
 hominum quae pietatem relaxant et lethargum ac securitatem  
 carnalem induc<sup>u</sup>nt." Bunyan is in the line of the true  
 Protestant succession in persistently weighing sin in the  
statera sanctuarii. Human balances are certainly to be  
 conceded their place and function. The danger of our  
 time lies in the delusion that there are no others. If  
 a decline of the sense of personal sin is a symptom of the  
 disease of atheism and materialism, we can scarcely con-  
 gratulate ourselves upon such a phenomenon.

It must of course be remembered that Bunyan's doctrine  
 of sin does not stand by itself. Critics of the type of  
 Mr Alfred Noyes seem to forget this. They leave us with  
 the impression of Bunyan as a pitiable sin-ridden figure.  
 They take little account of the fact that his burden was  
 eventually removed. But surely that is the whole point  
 of his life's experiences. 'Here is a sinner', says  
 Bunyan /

Bunyan of himself, but that is not his whole testimony which is rather this, 'Here is a sinner who has found salvation'. His doctrine of sin, taken by itself would stamp him as a pessimist of a far darker dye than Schopenhauer himself. It is no gospel of good news to mankind. Indeed it is impossible to conceive of a message so utterly hopeless, so overwhelmingly disastrous. Bunyan's doctrine of sin is, in truth, no gospel, but he regards it as the necessary preliminary and presupposition of the gospel. The foundations must be thoroughly cleared and the rock laid bare, if the building is to be securely based. "Grace Abounding" is the story of his long and painful search for the true foundation. His experiences therein recorded make fearsome reading, but it should be remembered that they are rehearsed from the view-point of salvation. It is a man who once was lost but who now has happily found his way, that is speaking - a man who once was sick nigh unto death but is now recovered. "Grace Abounding", as its title indicates, is not the outpouring of one sunk in despair. Convalescents in many cases are prone to magnify the gravity of their past illness. It thrills them to picture the nearness of their escape from death. So /

So it may have been with Bunyan. In any case he felt that his experiences tended to magnify the grace of God. The more terrifying these experiences were, the more marvellous was the grace of God which saved him from ruin. Where sin so much abounded, grace must have much more abounded, else he would have perished. He felt himself a living miracle of the saving grace of God. It is against the dark background of human sin that the love of God stands out in all its clearness. The darker the surrounding colouring, the more vivid the contrast with the central brightness.

Bunyan's doctrine of sin must then be interpreted in the light of his doctrine of salvation of which it is the preliminary and the foundation. His dicta on sin are prolegomena to his theory of salvation. "It is within the province of Christian dogmatics", says Macpherson<sup>1</sup>, "only to announce such a doctrine of sin as will prepare the way for the doctrine of the necessity and possibility and reality of redemption. Man has sinned, and his sin is of such a character that he can be delivered from it only by the special interference of God in an act of redeeming love". This was precisely Bunyan's position. He /

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1. Macpherson p. 264.

He is concerned to make it clear that sin is of a character so grave that salvation, if it is to come at all, must proceed from God alone.

Bunyan studiously avoided the error of healing the hurt of the daughter of his people slightly. A surgeon is careful that his patient's wound is clean before he permits it to heal. He leaves it open till all the supuration has been drained out. This is analogous to Bunyan's treatment of the disease of sin. He considered it no unhealthy sign to 'tarry long at Sinai'. He had a grave suspicion and a rooted mistrust of any short cuts to salvation. Formalist and Hypocrisy who came "tumbling<sup>1</sup> over the wall" into the narrow way were not genuine pilgrims in his eyes. For him there is no easy transit to the Celestial City by such a railroad as Nathaniel Hawthorne has depicted as in harmony with the degenerate taste of modern times. Bunyan stands for the eternal truth that the Christian life is a struggle whose grim reality is not to be evaded. So long as men realise this, they will read their own experiences into the story of the pilgrim. To the end of time earnest souls will be at one with Bunyan in his horror of sin. They will agree that of all the ills that /

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1. Pilgrim's Progress p. 52.

that oppress humanity it is by far the gravest, that indeed it is the one real and essential evil.

Another distinctive feature in Bunyan's doctrine of sin, in addition to his emphasis on its gravity, is his unconscious introduction into Puritan thought of a liberalising influence. "The Puritans", says Macaulay,<sup>1</sup> "drove imagination from its last stronghold". If that be true then Bunyan, Puritan though he was, represented an implicit reaction against Puritanism. An imaginative Puritan is a rara avis, if not a contradiction in terms, but that is what Bunyan undoubtedly was. Even in early days when his professed outlook was narrow, his vivid imagination asserted itself, and, as time went on, his mind broadened and mellowed. He escaped in large measure from the bondage of fear and found himself able to speak ecstatically of the love of God.

Like Samuel Rutherford and Jeremy Taylor,<sup>2</sup> Bunyan is an example of a man with two minds, apparently incompatible yet united in one personality. His theological treatises show him to be severely logical and matter-of-fact /

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1. Miscellaneous Writings and Speeches. London. 1889.

2. This line of thought was suggested by Prof. Paterson.



fact. He had an argumentative mind, but he had also a poetical mind. He loved pictures and images. He stands unrivalled as the master of allegory. He had a sense of style and was an artist in words. In this he may be said to stand alone among the professional exponents of Puritanism. In John Milton Puritanism no doubt produced a poet of singular if not first-rate eminence but Milton were primarily not a theologian but a scholar and a man of letters. It was indeed something new and portentous that a great imaginative work should proceed from the straitest sect of the preachers of Calvinistic Puritanism. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* paves the way for broader and wider views than its author professed to hold. In it he escapes the trammels of logic and "lets himself go". It helped to usher in a freer and a saner outlook. Bunyan's special gift was not theology but allegory. He came into the world to write the *Pilgrim's Progress*. That was his mission. That work of his is much more than a manual of Calvinistic theology. It is a picture of the struggle of the soul of man towards higher realities.

It is significant that there were those who frowned upon the *Pilgrim's Progress* at its first appearance. This we /

we gather from Bunyan's quaint rhyming apologies prefaced to both parts of his work. It was regarded in some quarters as an insidious divergence from the true Puritan position. It was looked at askance as unworthy of a serious theologian. It savoured of "romance", and romance was taboo in Puritan circles. Fortunately Bunyan did not allow himself to be deterred by such criticisms. He risked the displeasure of those who would have placed his book upon a Puritan index expurgatorius. He gave his sanctified imagination free play and thus introduced a more liberal and a more human atmosphere into theology. The great idea dawned upon him that all good gifts of the human mind and spirit may be consecrated to the service of the Highest and the Best, and so instead of crushing and repressing his wonderful imagination he laid it at the feet of Christ. He was a Puritan of the Puritans, and yet his great work was the harbinger of an emancipation from its darker and gloomier features. Almost in spite of himself he helped to make religion more humane and more genial. Hence it may be claimed that Bunyan makes his most distinctive and permanent contribution to theology when he ceases to speak as a professional theologian /

theologian and unfolds the pilgrim's tale. He builded better than he knew. His theology as seen in the Pilgrim's Progress was wider and more human than he thought. From that pulpit he preaches with helpfulness and edification not merely to Puritans and Calvinists of the 17th century but to all earnest souls of every age. This was indeed an original and a welcome contribution to religious thought exerting an indirect though none the less powerful influence upon the attitude of succeeding generations to the problem of sin.

Much water has flowed under the bridge of time since Bunyan's day. He stands removed from us at a distance of approximately two centuries and a half. What changes have passed over the world of thought during that interval, and how have these changes affected the legacy left by Bunyan? To these questions it would appear fitting that we should now attempt to address ourselves, though in the space at our disposal we must content ourselves with very general and very fragmentary answers. Of Bunyan's bequest to mankind has the whole capital long since been consumed, or, if not, what portion of it still bears interest and is likely so to do in time coming? Powerful sifting forces /

forces have been ceaselessly at work since the 17th century. What grains of truth still remain on the threshing floor? We select three great tendencies or movements of modern times which have tested and are testing the validity of Bunyan's views on sin. These are:- (1) The advance of science, (2) the awakening of the social conscience and (3) the movement towards religious healthymindedness.

(1) The triumphant advance of science has undoubtedly been the most revolutionary force in the world of thought since Bunyan's day. It was inevitable that its repercussions should be felt even in the realm of theology. What portions of Bunyan's teaching may be held to have survived the shock, and what portions must be dismissed as antiquated and discredited, by enlightened thinkers of the twentieth century? These questions must be faced if Bunyan is to continue to rank as an authoritative teacher of religion.

It is interesting and significant to note that Francis Bacon, "The<sup>1</sup> practical creator of scientific induction", died on the eve of Bunyan's birth, in the year 1626. Bacon was the "morning star" of modern science, and the light he heralded three centuries ago now floods the /

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1. Article. Chambers Encyclopaedia. 1888.

the world without having even yet attained its meridian. The leaven he introduced has had time to permeate and penetrate deep and far, but in Bunyan's day its presence was scarcely realised. Scholastic methods of thought were still dominant, and science had not yet become a word to conjure with. Bacon may be claimed to have given to thinking men a new orientation, and to have liberated them from what often proved but a vicious circle. He is the progenitor and the prophet of modern science. The foundation he laid still stands, and it now supports an imposing superstructure. Induction, with its auxiliaries of observation and experiment, has gained many victories, and there are those who hold that it has driven all rivals off the field, and that science has established itself as the creed and the religion of the future.

There can be no question of the amazing fruitfulness of the Baconian method. Viewed at least superficially, it has amply justified itself by results. The record of modern inventions in various spheres of applied science reads like a fairy tale. The material comfort of mankind has been immeasurably enhanced, and sickness and suffering have been very appreciably relieved. A marvellous, not to /

to say dazzling work for humanity has been done in the name of science, and the end is not yet. All this has affected in a curiously conflicting manner man's estimate of himself. The achievements of science, superficially viewed, have tended to man's glorification. Science has accomplished so much that boastful spirits have been fain to say that all things are possible to her. On the other hand she assigns to man and his world but an insignificant place in the immensities of space and time, and the real danger is that she may cause man to think too meanly of himself and to disparage his earth as utterly unworthy to be the scene of any such stupendous drama as the story of redemption. Science has deposed the earth from her position at the centre of the physical universe. Does this involve the corresponding degradation of her inhabitants? Bunyan teaches that the sin and salvation of man are subjects of supreme concern to the Almighty Creator of the universe. The purely inductive scientist to whom matter is everything and mind is nothing, finds this dictum hard indeed of acceptance. The final verdict of materialistic science upon mankind would appear to be a depressing emphasis upon his inherent littleness and insignificance .

But it must not be imagined that the inductive  
method /

method is self-sufficing and independent. Induction and deduction do not stand to each other as the true to the false. They are not mutual foes, but rather the counterparts and allies of each other. Neither can say to the other, 'I have no need of thee'. The scientific investigator requires to make use of a thread on which to string together the various beads he has collected. He builds upon the basis of certain unproved propositions. He assumes and accepts such dogmas as the uniformity of nature and the universality of the reign of law. He does not start without any presuppositions, else he would arrive nowhere. He has his own working hypotheses which he may modify in the light of subsequent discovery. In short, the scientist no less than the theologian has a faith of his own. It is commonly taken for granted that science is all sight and no faith. This is an egregious popular error. Science may have thrown the deductive method into the shade but it has not annulled it, nor deprived it of its indefeasible place and function in human mentality. Science itself cannot dispense with certain basic axioms and postulates. The scientific spirit, which proves all things, is by no means essentially hostile to faith, and is quite compatible with an /

an idealistic philosophy. Moreover, even when it has degenerated into materialism - which system of thought is certainly anti-religious - it does not cease to be a working hypothesis, a philosophy, a faith. So long as the deductive method holds its place, the battle of faith has not been lost, and this will be so long as human nature and the laws of thought retain their present constitution. Science has its rights and its sphere, but so has faith. Faith must submit itself to the scrutiny of science, and science must call in the aid of faith. Faith generalises; science, so far she finds it possible, weighs and tests these generalisations. Individual phenomena can be classified only in the light of some unifying hypothesis, and so soon as we formulate a hypothesis we pass from science to faith. Our hypothesis, as in the case of the epoch-making theory of evolution, may be supported by an immense accumulation of observed facts, but from the nature of the case, our observation cannot take cognisance of every relevant fact; in other words, it cannot be universal. There are many missing links in our chain, and we can do no more than assume without positive proof that these, if found, would fit into a place therein.

Our /



Our hypothesis, though reasoned, remains an hypothesis.

Our faith, though rational, remains a faith.

Protestant theology, since Bunyan's day, has on the whole, come to recognise the genuine scientific spirit as no enemy, but, on the contrary, a valuable ally. The aim of science is the discovery of truth, and this lofty ideal is second only in nobility to the pursuit of goodness. The paths of truth, beauty and goodness must eventually converge and unite. The reverent scientist and the open-minded theologian are not fighting face to face but side by side. No system of theology can stand which fears and opposes the advance of truth. We must face the facts and if the facts cannot be fitted into our preconceived systems, these systems must be modified to make room for them. We must be prepared to welcome the truth disconcerting though it be, from whatever quarter it comes. Religion is no tissue of cunningly-devised fables which cannot bear inspection. If it be not true, the sooner its hollowness is exposed the better. If it be true, let it invite and welcome reverent examination.

Confident of the truth of Christianity, modern scholars have applied and are still applying scientific methods /

methods to the study of Holy Scripture. Their right to do so is universally granted except in certain quarters where the "fundamentalist" attitude prevails and where there is undue fear for the endangerment of the safety of the ark of God. The scientific spirit, which is prevalent in the world around, has not been denied entrance to the Protestant Churches; within their borders science is now recognised as the hand-maid of religion. There is here a notable change and advance since the time of Bunyan. The Reformers opposed their infallible Book to the Roman Catholics' infallible Church as the seat of authority in religion. Bunyan and the Puritans believed in the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture. For them it was the final court of appeal. The modern Protestant is equally reverent in his attitude to the Word of God, but he realises that the Bible possesses a human, as well as a Divine, aspect. The Divine message is imparted to us in a Book placed in our hands. It is the greatest of Books and at the same time one book among many. To regard it as exempt from the scrutiny and criticism applied to other documents of antiquity is not reverence but superstition. We, modern Protestants, are convinced that the Bible does not /

not stand to lose but rather to gain by the application to its pages, of the ripest human scholarship. Whatever helps to make its contents better understood will certainly not damage the cause of true religion. The glory of the Bible is not diminished but rather enhanced when it is allowed to appear, so to speak, on its own merits. When it is placed side by side with other books, its eminence is all the more manifest. Moreover, in the interests of truth both scientific and religious it cannot be withheld from scientific scrutiny. Scientific and literary criticism claim their right to approach it as they do any other book which has come down to us from antiquity, and the exercise of this right is to be neither feared nor denied by the Church. Specialists in all departments of Biblical learning accordingly direct their powers towards the examination and elucidation of the sacred page. The verbal inerrancy of Scripture has been found untenable. There are discrepancies in narratives of the same event which cannot be explained away. But these do not mean that the glory of the Bible is departed. There is evidence of myth and legend in the accounts of the Creation and probably in the history of the early patriarchs. But we admit all this without feeling that such things affect the substance /

substance of the Faith. We have discovered that the Bible does not profess to be a handbook of science. Religion is its province and here it shines with undiminished splendour. Its authority in its own sphere, the central sphere of human life, is paramount as ever.

Scientific methods in their application to Biblical study were unknown in Bunyan's day. They are now generally recognised as wholly legitimate, and indeed necessary and praise-worthy in the interests of truth. The lower criticism which laboriously applies all the apparatus of scholarship towards the discovery of the original text and the original meaning, and the higher criticism which busies itself with questions of authorship and date - are modern phenomena unheard of in the 17th century. Bunyan died on the eve of the epoch-making work of Richard Bentley, the father of modern literary and historical criticism as applied first to the secular classics and later to the Bible itself. As a result of the process thus introduced, the Bible is no longer viewed as a single book but rather as a library or collection of books proceeding from many hands and many centuries. Its essential unity has not indeed been impaired. It is recognised as being bound together by one great purpose and as contributing throughout /

throughout to one great theme. But all its varied contributions to that theme are no longer ranked as of equal value. The Bible is now held to be the vehicle of a progressive revelation. It too exhibits the laws of growth and evolution. Clearer light breaks forth from its pages as we travel onward from age to age. Genesis does not speak to the modern Christian with the same authority as St. John. A dogma in theology can no longer be proved by a stray text drawn from any portion of Holy Scripture. The enlightenment and education of the Chosen People were gradual, and we in our day cannot approve certain practices which their consciences passed uncondemned. It is a relief to discover that, thanks to the conception of a progressive revelation, it is no longer necessary for us to apologise for, or to seek to explain away certain actions whose morality we instinctively disapprove. The idea of evolution deserves at least this meed of gratitude from the modern theologian. If it has added certain difficulties to his task, it has also removed certain others.

Modern Biblical theology studies the books of the Bible in allied groups taking each group as far as possible by /

by itself. Thus the Pauline doctrine of sin is kept distinct from that of the Synoptists. There can be little doubt that Augustinianism and Calvinism are preponderatingly Pauline. But the Synoptists and St. John have at least as good a right to be heard as St. Paul, and are as scriptural as he. Modern Biblical Science helps to redress the balance which was unduly weighted in favour of St. Paul, whose view of sin is held to be responsible for the darker elements in the Calvinistic doctrine. By all means, let the great Apostle's doctrine of sin be elucidated and expounded; only let it be labelled as Pauline, and not necessarily as in harmony with the whole of the rest of the New Testament.

It is manifest that Protestant dogmatics depends largely if not wholly upon correct exegesis of Scripture. The consistent Calvinist, whose supreme authority is the Word of God, must be prepared to modify or even to abandon any article in his creed which is discovered by genuine scholarship to have lost its supposed basis in Scripture.. The doctrine of the immediate imputation of Adam's first transgression to all his descendants by ordinary generation finds its locus classicus in the passage containing the words  $\epsilon\phi' \omega \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma \eta\mu\alpha\rho\tau\omicron\upsilon$  (Rom. 5:12) /

(Rom. 5:12). But then these words have been found capable as Stevens<sup>1</sup> points out, of varying interpretations. It is highly doubtful whether they are able to bear all the weight which Calvinism imposes upon them. For the settlement of such questions we can only look to the impartial arbitrament of reverent Biblical Science. It is utterly illegitimate to attempt to twist the apostle's words to suit a preconceived theory. Another proof-test which, according to Stevens,<sup>2</sup> the Calvinists strained unwarrantably is Eph. 2:3, in particular the words τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς . It is the task of Biblical Theology to discover precisely what was in the mind of St. Paul when he wrote these words, and if the Calvinistic exegesis is discovered to be indefensible, the dogma superimposed on the words must be surrendered unless it finds reliable support in another quarter. Stevens<sup>3</sup> asserts that having been sifted by Biblical Science the Pauline teaching on sin is found to contain three elements:- (1) Sin has its origin in the will, (2) "Sin is universal and guilty" and (3) "A bias towards sin is propagated by heredity".

Biblical /

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1. Stevens p. 354.
2. p. 359.
3. p. 360.

Biblical Theology tends to simplify dogmatics and to reduce considerably its bulk and content.

It is significant that the third point mentioned above as an element in the Pauline doctrine of sin receives corroboration from an unexpected quarter. Evolutionary science has brought forward impressive testimony in favour of the law of heredity and the solidarity of mankind. It is a grave error to suppose that the findings of science are necessarily hostile to religion; indeed, if true, they must in the last resort be in harmony with religion. The innate "bias towards sin" is no figment of the diseased imagination. It is a palpable fact, demonstrated by scientific observation. Heredity on its sinister side is just the scientific terminology for what is known to theologians as original sin. This at least is a dogma which evolutionary science does not require the Christian to surrender. The general tenour of Bunyan's teaching on this topic remains undisturbed.

In his work entitled "The Ascent through Christ", Principal Griffith Jones shows "how easily"<sup>1</sup> all the older thought on the mystery of sin is capable of being translated /

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1. p. 218.



translated into evolutionary language". On the whole it may be safely asserted that the modifications which reverent science demands upon the teaching of Bunyan on this topic are extraordinarily insignificant. Theories of the origin and nature of primitive man are not of the highest moment. Whether he is the latest link in a long chain of evolutionary development or whether he came into being by a special creative fiat are questions that do not affect the fundamentals of the faith. Christianity is not incompatible with the theory of evolution. Whether the Fall was a failure to rise or a descent from a higher level already attained, seems immaterial. The patent fact is that there is sin in the world and that sin has a long history behind it having somehow infected the whole race with its poison. These things science, so far from denying, amply confirms. Our answer then to the question whether modern scientific thought has overturned the faith of Bunyan is a decided negative.

(2) The second great movement of modern times to which we referred as testing the validity of Bunyan's view of sin is the awakening of the social conscience. It is often debated whether in truth human civilisation is making /

making progress, or whether any alleged advance is only illusory. There are those who hold that the history of man is made up of recurring cycles of growth and decay, and that we are travelling forward not in a straight line but in a circle which is doomed ere long to double backward, if not upon itself, at least in a retrograde direction. To this it may be answered that we have few more tangible evidences of real progress than the modern awakening of the social conscience. There is abounding evidence in many quarters that the spirit of the age since Bunyan's time has swung mightily from the side of individualism in the direction of socialism. To Sir William Harcourt, a leading English statesman towards the close of the 19th century is attributed the dictum, "we are all socialists now". Socialism, in the sense of social reform, is the professed ideal and inspiration of all political parties. There is a widespread concern for the lot of the poor and the depressed and the suffering. The Good Samaritan is abroad in the land, and his kind heart and open hand and skilful appliances have worked wonders. If science has been impressed into the service of war, she has also ungrudgingly dedicated her choicest powers and her most brilliant achievements /

achievements to the Christlike cause of the relief of misery and pain. It may be asserted with little fear of contradiction that the modern heart is more sensitive to the cry of distress than any previous human age has been - and not only so, but more practical and more efficacious in the removal thereof.

This movement, highly commendable though it be, has in some cases developed features to which exception should be taken. William Wilberforce, the liberator of the slave, is reported to have said that he was so much concerned with the woes of the down-trodden that he forgot that he himself had a soul to be saved. This was a noble utterance, but it points a warning finger in the direction of a danger peculiar to our time. There are many who think that philanthropy in itself is religion enough. The second great requirement of the law - love to man - is elevated to the foremost place, while the first and greatest commandment - love to God - tends to be altogether ignored. We claim to be actuated by love, but in many cases our love has no basis in faith. Philanthropy must be rooted in, and nourished by faith, else it will soon wither and die. Moreover, the object of our /

our devotion must be the highest and the best element in man. We must have in view his chief good - what the older divines would call the salvation of his soul, what in modern language is termed his moral and spiritual welfare. We are engrossed in the physical and material advancement of our race, which is entirely commendable so far as it goes, but it does not go far enough nor deep enough. We labour to make men more comfortable and prosperous and we tend to leave higher good to take care of itself. We are expecting too much of merely material betterment. Our fashionable social gospel needs to be invigorated by the tonic of individualism. All other things needful must not be permitted to usurp the throne of the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. The Christian method is not, first and last, improvement of environment, but first improvement and renewal of individual character wherefrom the other and lesser boon will inevitably proceed.

Bunyan has been freely criticised as unblushingly and shamefully individualistic. His view of sin has been held up to scorn as morbidly self-centred and egoistic. His unworldliness may be pilloried as "otherworldliness".  
- which /

- which is none the less held to be essentially and hideously selfish although its affections are centred in things unseen. In his excessive and frantic concern for his own soul and its salvation he is said to ignore the souls of others. Did not the pilgrim leave his wife and children to their fate in the doomed City of Destruction in his precipitate flight from the wrath to come?

This latter criticism is manifestly one-sided and shallow. It is surely evident that the Pilgrim left his home, only in a spiritual sense. After becoming a Christian he<sup>1</sup> was in reality a better and not a worse husband and father than before. Superior critics surely do not need the reminder that the Pilgrim's Progress is an allegory, not to be taken as literal history. There is ample evidence in the pilgrim's conversation with Charity<sup>2</sup> in the House Beautiful that he was deeply concerned for the welfare and salvation of his wife and children. Bunyan is very far from ignoring or undervaluing the social side of the Christian life and the social responsibility of the individual Christian. This is clearly in evidence in the second part of the immortal dream. /

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1. See Offor. Vol. I. p. LXVII.

2. Pilgrim's Progress p. 67.

dream. It cannot be denied that he was intensely anxious to save the souls of others. Of this his labours and sufferings as an evangelist furnish ample proof. To picture him as ceaselessly engaged in a selfish and brutal struggle to "save his own skin" is a false and a ridiculous caricature. He realised, however, the great truth that the spiritual journey, must in a very real sense be made alone. Religion begins with the individual though it does not end there. It is a matter between the soul and God. Men do not enter the Kingdom of heaven en masse but individually. A man's main responsibility is after all for himself.

Our age would be the gainer if its social impulses and activities were more deeply rooted in an individualism such as that of Bunyan. Individualism and socialism are the two foci of the ellipse of human life. The place and the right of each must be safeguarded. Faith must find its expression in love, but love cannot endure if there be no faith behind it. Love is the fruit but faith is the root. Faith is the individualistic, and love, the socialistic side of human life, and Bunyan timeously reminds us that in our exaltation of brotherly love /

love we must not forget faith - which would be to forget God.

(3) The third modern tendency to which reference was made as sifting and testing the teaching of Bunyan on sin was the movement towards what Professor James calls the religion of Healthy-mindedness. In modern times there has been a decided reaction against the type of religion popularly associated with the name, Puritanism. Introspection has become to many a word of evil omen. The Puritans are criticised as having taken themselves and their sins much too seriously, and as having been "righteous overmuch". They are held to have been morbidly self-conscious and to have lived and moved and had their being in an unwholesome atmosphere of gloom and restriction and severity. Apostles of the modern creed declare that the true religion of the soul of man ought to be saner, freer, more healthful, more joyous.

The two motives that lead to salvation are fear and love, and modern criticism of Bunyan's teaching from the "healthy-minded" point of view may be said to be summed up in the statement that it is vitiated by an undue preponderance of fear. Robertson of Brighton<sup>1</sup> disparages and /

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1. Sermons. Vol. II. p. 89.

and despises 'reward and punishment' morality. "Into true penitence", he declares, "The idea of punishment never enters". This is a characteristically modern thought. Fear of the consequences of sin was a compelling motive in Bunyan's time. It entered largely into the theology of the Puritan Divines<sup>1</sup> and figured prominently in their appeals. Bunyan, as we have seen, frequently enlarges upon the torments of hell, whereas, in these days of ours, it is said with some show of truth that hell has been dropped out of modern theology. It is fear that, according to Bunyan, in most if not in all cases first drives the pilgrim to the Christian life. He is terrified by the threat of impending doom. Bunyan's own religious life was haunted by fear especially in his early days, though it must be admitted that, in certain passages, he extols love as against fear. He claims for instance<sup>2</sup> that the doctrine of God's love in Christ "will more engage the soul to God than all the threatenings, thunder-claps and curses that come from the law itself". Moreover Christian when on the verge of his dread encounter with Apollyon thus boldly declared his love to his Divine master:- /

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1. cf. Doddridge. p. 32.

2. Ofor. Vol. II. p. 190.



master:- "And<sup>1</sup> besides, O thou destroying Apollyon, to speak truth, I like His service, His wages, His government, His company and country better than thine; therefore leave off to persuade me further: I am His servant and I will follow Him."

It cannot therefore, by any means, be maintained that Bunyan, at any rate in later life, had no personal appreciation of the motive of constraining love. It is very far from the truth to say that his religion was motivated wholly by fear. But it must be granted that he gives great weight to the element of fear. Nor do we feel inclined to apologise for this, because the motive of fear can never be wholly eliminated and ejected from Christian teaching without grave loss. Even perfect love though it casts out slavish fear, is entirely compatible with awe and reverence, and not at any time to be dissevered from them. The consequences of sin must always act as a deterrent and should be plainly held up as such. There is a place for the appeal to enlightened self-interest. If we do not choose, in the manner of the Puritans, to dwell upon what the sinner will suffer, it is at least our /

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1. Pilgrim's Progress p. 77.

our duty to point with as much impressiveness as we can command to what he is missing. Fear, in the sense of feeling of urgency must have a permanent place in Christian motivation. Even if the materialistic hell of the Puritan Divines be abandoned, there still remains the modern Protestant conception based upon the New Testament, of the future state of the finally impenitent, and this is scarcely less appalling. "The<sup>1</sup> hell of the future", says Principal Griffith Jones, "must mean a condition in which the soul is left to its own self-created environment of evil. In this life it is harder and harder for corrupt souls to change into goodness .... The probability is that it will be correspondingly hard. - this at least is certain - to change in the life to come". The words are restrained, but none the less, perhaps all the more, they are calculated to strike fear into the heart. If they state the truth, then the Christian preacher who withholds their message from his hearers, is incurring a grave responsibility. The note of urgency in Christian teaching must be retained, or, if lost, must be recovered. If war be happily abolished then there must be discovered some /

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1. p. 201.

some substitute to develop heroism and to counteract flabbiness. If hell be dropped - though we decline to admit that in any real sense this is either necessary or desirable - then at least there must be discovered some motive equally efficacious to keep alive the sense of urgency. The Puritan Divines believed strongly in the efficacy of fear, and we in our easy-going and careless times, have much to learn from them in this respect.

Bunyan's view of sin was at least natural to his temperament, and his temperament will always have its representatives. The "healthy-minded" attitude has become fashionable in modern times, but at least it should be recognised that there are "sick" as well as "healthy" souls among us. The present tendency is to minimise the gravity of sin and to regard the sense of sin as morbid and diseased. Indeed there are those, as for example the Christian Scientists, who deny altogether the reality of evil. To Bunyan who viewed it from the standpoint of a holy God - which standpoint is largely ignored in these days - it was a tremendous and a terrifying fact. Granted that his view may be at times exaggerated and even morbid, yet he stands for the essential gravity of sin, and our age has swung too far to the other extreme. Furthermore, it is easy to /

to fling epithets, and earnestness is always liable to the charge of morbidness. Suffice it to say that to take sin out of the system of Christian teaching is to knock the keystone out of the bridge. Bunyan's view, moreover, safeguards human responsibility which many modern theories tend to undermine. It is submitted that modern religion and modern life would gain by a return to Bunyan in the direction of a deepened sense of sin.

Have we left Bunyan's theology behind in our forward march? Is it a "creed outworn", fitted perhaps for the 17th century of our era but untenable in the twentieth? We have given reasons for a negative answer to these questions. If Bunyan's teaching were brought up to date, we would find his nearest modern representative in the late Dr. Alexander Whyte. Dr. Whyte was in no small measure John Bunyan redivivus. - John Bunyan plus modern scholarship and minus the old doctrine of verbal inspiration. Dr. Whyte's own teaching shows that marvellously little of Bunyan's theology need be discarded and that all its essentials may be retained. The two men, separated by two centuries are one in their emphasis on sin. They were /

were manifestly kindred spirits. A remark made by Dr. Whyte<sup>1</sup> which is relevant to the current vogue of the religion of healthy-mindedness, may be quoted in conclusion. He was speaking of a young friend of whom he said, "I should apply to him, as fully as to any one I know, the phrase anima naturaliter Christiana". "But", he added, "I have observed that such characters seldom gain an experience of the deepest evangelical religion". It is a penetrating criticism of those in whom the sense of sin is deficient or absent and who congratulate themselves thereon. Our contention is that, in many respects, we in this age would do well to adopt as a motto, "Back to Bunyan," always remembering that his doctrine of sin is only the preliminary, but, as he conceived it, the necessary preliminary to his doctrine of salvation - 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves' ... 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin'. (I John 1: 8,7).

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1. Life. p. 373.

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